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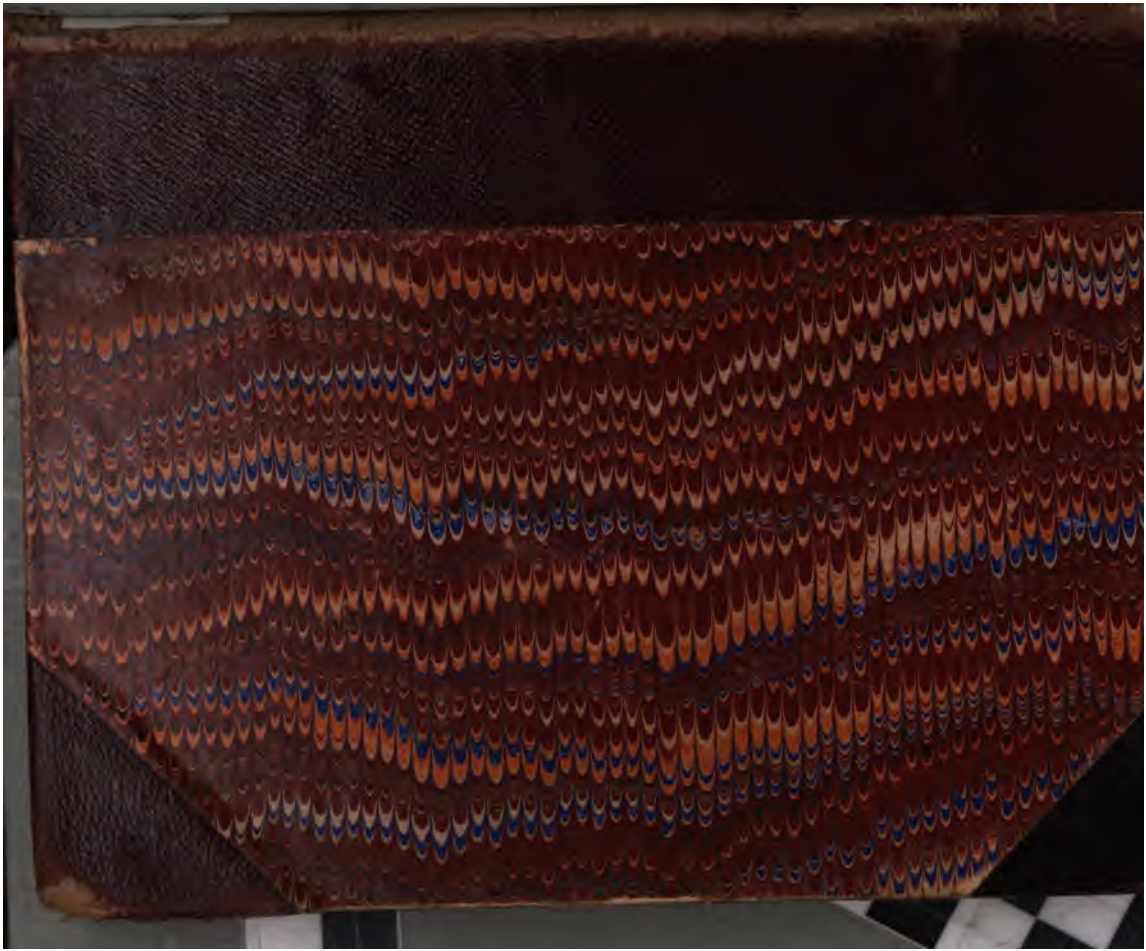

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UNDER
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BY

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1884.

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UNDER THE RED FLAG.

CHAPTER I.

GRETCHEN IN THE GARDEN.

STARS shining in the deep purple of a summer sky; June roses blooming and breathing sweetness on the soft cool night; leaves whispering; low faint sounds of falling waters from a fountain hidden in the foliage; and across the dim shadowy night the flaring lights and gaudy colours of a painted and gilded temple, in which the band is playing one of Strauss's tenderest waltzes.

The melodious strain is drawing to its close. The players attack the coda with crash and hurry, the pace intensifying as they near the end. All the waltzers have fallen out of the ranks, except one couple, and those two waltz as if it were impossible to tire—as if they were the very spirit

of dance and melody, creatures of fire and air, motion incarnate.

The girl's golden head reclines against her partner's shoulder, but not with an air of weariness; the attitude expresses only repose; the graceful gliding step, the harmonious flowing movements, are as natural as the fall of waters or the waving of forest boughs. The rosy lips are slightly parted, the sweet eyes look starwards with a dreamy gaze. There is far more of spirit than of gross earthliness in the slim willowy form, the fair and radiant face, which the stars and the lamps shine upon alternately, as those revolving figures circle—now in the glare of the orchestra, and then under those solemn worlds of light which are soon to look upon stranger, sadder, darker, crueller sights than this Sunday evening dance at the Closerie des Lilas.

There are some who think it is a wicked thing to dance on a Sunday evening, even after one has worshipped at one's parish church faithfully and reverently on Sunday morning; some there are who think it is wicked to dance at all; and there are others who worship in dancing, and are moved to wild leapings and whirlings by the spirit of piety; others, again, who are devil-dancers, and worship the principle of evil in their demoniac gyrations. But assuredly, of all who ever danced

upon this earth, none ever danced on the edge of a more terrible volcano than that which trembled and throbbed under the feet of these light-hearted revellers to-night—happy, unforeseeing, rejoicing in the balmy breath of summer, the starlit sky, the warmth and the flowers, with no thought that this fair Paris, whitely beautiful in the sheen of starlight and moonlight, was like a phantasmal or fairy city—a city of palaces which were soon to sink in dust and ashes, beauty that was to be changed for burning, while joy and love fled shrieking from a carnival of blood and fire.

Even to-night there were bystanders in the lamp-lit garden who shook their heads solemnly as they talked of the probability of war with Prussia. The battle of Sadowa had been the beginning of evil. France had played into the hands of her most dangerous rival, and had been swindled out of the price of her neutrality. To have allowed Austria to be crushed by Bismarck was worse than a crime, it was a blunder. And now all the signs and tokens of the time pointed to the likelihood of war. The day had come when the overweening ambition of the house of Brandenburg must be checked, and in the opinion of the Bonapartists the onus to fight was upon France. Opinion among the people was divided; and there were many who were friends of peace.

A campaign would be a triumph for French arms, of course; but such triumphs, however certain, are never won without loss. For France as a people there must needs be profit and fame; but for individuals—well, even in a succession of victories some French blood must be shed, some French corpses must lie scattered on distant battle-fields—there must be cypress as well as laurel.

Yet the idea of impending war was not unpleasant. It electrified the intellectual atmosphere, set the hearts of men and women throbbing with new hopes, new fears. To elderly people it seemed only the other day that the army was coming home in triumph after the Italian War, and France was crowning the liberators of a sister land; but to the young people that Italian campaign seemed to have happened a long while ago. It was time that France should arise in her might and strike a great blow.

So the middle-aged folks, mere spectators of the evening's amusement, put their heads together and discussed the political situation—some arguing from one point of view, some from another; and those two waltzers circled faster and faster with the closing bars of the coda. With the last chord they stopped. The dark-haired young man withdrew his arm reluctantly from his partner's

slim waist, and then they went off arm-in-arm towards the shadow of the trees—dark-haired youth and fair-haired youth, all the world to each other, and infinitely happy.

"Faust and Marguerite," said a corpulent citizen, who had been watching the dancers while he talked of Bismarck and the Duc de Gramont.

"Happily I see no Mephistopheles," replied his companion. "If the young people go to perdition it will be their own doing."

"The girl is very pretty," said the other, "and I think I have seen her lover's face before to-night."

"He is to be seen any day at the Café Malmus. He is a journalist—a sprig of nobility, I believe, but as poor as Job. He writes for the papers. He ranks as an *esprit fort* and something of a wit."

"And the girl—do you know who she is? She has hardly the air of a grisette."

"She is like Nilsson in Marguerite. No, I'll swear she is no grisette—nothing of the Mimi Pinson there, my friend. I never saw her till to-night. Look yonder, just emerging from the trees; do you see?"

"Is it Mephistopheles?"

"No, but the spirit of evil in a woman's shape

—envy, hatred, revenge, all incarnate in a jealous woman. Great Heaven, such a face—see, see!"

His friend looked in the direction indicated. Yes; there, creeping from the covert of the trees, stealthily, serpent-like, stole forth a woman—young, handsome, smartly dressed, with a black silk gown, and a bonnet all roses and lace—a shopkeeper in holiday attire. The face was dark with hatred and malice, the eyes were bright with angry fires. Slowly, stealthily, the footsteps followed in the path the lovers had taken—following as the shadow follows the sun, as night follows day.

But now the band struck up a quadrille composed of the liveliest airs from the *Princesse de Trébizonde*, which had lately enchanted the boulevards; and then began those wild choric measures in which Parisian youth excels all other nations. The *habitués* of the garden—the clerks and the shopmen and the commercial travellers, industrial and intellectual youth of every grade—began their diversions, to the delight of the spectators. Legs were flung in the air, wild leapings and convulsive evolutions diversified the humdrum figures of the legitimate quadrille; each dancer tried to out-Herod his *vis-à-vis*. Now the right had it; anon, by a still wilder bound, the left triumphed; while the lookers-on laughed and applauded. But there

was no offence in this outbreak of muscular activity and high spirits. Sunday dances at these gardens are sacred to the people. There is very little admixture of the *demi-monde* on a Sunday evening; the clerk and the counter-jumper, the little industries of Paris, have the field to themselves.

The journalist and his fair-haired sweetheart did not reappear in the quadrille. They were sauntering side by side in the shadowy walks, hearing the joyous music vaguely; for the lowest whisper of a lover's voice has more power on the listening ear of love than the loudest orchestra that ever crashed and jingled in the music of *Orphée aux Enfers* or the *Grande Duchesse*.

"Why should Rose doom us to wait?" pleaded the journalist, bending his dark ardent eyes on the fair sweet face beside him. "What does poverty matter, if we are true to each other and strong to conquer fortune, as we are, Kathleen? We can bear a few privations in the present, knowing that Fate will be kinder in the future. I have won a shred of reputation already, though I write for such a wretched rag of a paper that I can earn very little money; but fame will come and money will follow before we are ten years older. At my age Balzac was no richer than I am."

"I am not afraid of poverty," answered the girl gently. "Why should I fear what I have known all my life? Rose and I have always been poor; but we have always been happy; except once when she had the fever. Ah, that was heart-breaking! No money to pay a doctor, no money for wine or fruit or fuel, no money for the rent, and the deadly fear of being turned out of our lodging while she lay helpless and unconscious on her bed. No prospect but the hospital. Yes, those were dark days. I almost envied the rich."

"Almost envied, my angel? I am made of a different stuff, and I hate and envy them at all times. That hatred gives bitterness to my pen—rancour, acidity, all the qualities our Parisians love. It is my chief stock-in-trade. I could not live without it."

"Ah, you feel the sting of poverty more than I do, because you come of a race that was once rich, a family that was once noble."

"Yes; I come of a decayed race—worn out, effete, passed by in the press and hurry of a commercial age. That is why I hate the insolent *roturier* brood that have battened in the sunshine of imperial favour; the stock-jobbers and gamblers, corrupt to the core, and swelling with pride in their dirty gold. My grandfather was a gentleman and a soldier; he fought for his king till the

last ray of hope had faded. And when his faithful little band of Chouans were scattered or slain, and he had escaped by the skin of his teeth from being shot down by the Blues, he shut himself up in the old stone tower of his château, and lived among peasants, as peasants live, and let his son and daughter run wild. My father was very little in advance of his father's farm-labourers in education or manners, when he entered the army, a lad of fifteen, soon after the restoration of the Bourbons. But he was one of the handsomest men of his day. He had good blood in his veins; and it seems somehow that race will tell, for twenty years later he was one of the finest soldiers in the French army. He married a rich wife, loved her passionately, spent all her money, ruined her life, and died broken-hearted and a pauper within a year of her death, leaving me to face the world, penniless, and with very few friends, at twelve years of age. The Empire was then in its golden dawn. One of my first memories is of the Coup d'Etat, that awful night of the second of December, when the bullets whistled along the Boulevard Poissonnière, like the hail-stones in a summer storm, and the terrified wondering bourgeois were mown down like ears of corn. My father was at the head of his regiment that night; and my mother and I were

looking down upon the scene from our apartment at a corner of the boulevard. Two years later I was an orphan."

"O, what a hard childhood and youth you must have had!" said Kathleen, full of pity.

"Not harder than yours, little one. You and the sister have not had too much of the sunshine of life, I take it."

"No; but we have always been together. We have faced the storm side by side; or perhaps I ought to say that Rose has faced it bravely by herself and sheltered me. But you have been quite alone—no brother, no sister."

"Not a creature of my own flesh and blood," answered Mortemar. "If it had not been for a bluff old brother-officer of my father's I must have starved, or been brought up on state charity. He got me a pension, just enough to pay my schooling in a humble way, from the Emperor, in consideration of my father's services on the second of December, but this allowance was to cease when I was eighteen. The influence of my father's old friend got me accepted at one of the finest schools near Paris, the school kept by the Dominican Fathers at Arcueil, where I was educated at a third of the pension paid for the other pupils, by the benevolence of the Prior, who pitied my desolate position. Here I remained till my eigh-

teenth birthday; and I ought to be a better man than I am after the care and kindness those good monks lavished upon me. When I left school the good old friend was dead, and from that time I have had to live—somehow—by my own labour of head or hands. I believe it is considered the finest training for youth; but it is hard, and it hardens the heart and the mind of a man."

"Has it hardened your heart, Gaston?" asked the girl, drawing a little closer to him in the dim starlit avenue.

"To all the world—except to you."

And now, at a turn of the leafy path, they came suddenly face to face with another couple —a stalwart broad-shouldered man of about thirty, with a tall good-looking young woman upon his arm—at sight of whom Kathleen exclaimed lovingly,

"Rose, where have Philip and you been hiding all the evening?"

"We have been looking on at the dancers, Kathleen," answered Rose; "and now I think it is time we all went home."

"So soon?" cried Kathleen.

"It has struck the three-quarters after ten. Did you see Madame Michel in her fine bonnet and gown?"

"What, Suzon Michel of the *crêmerie?*" asked Mortemar. "Is she here to-night?"

"She is here every Sunday night, I believe, and at the theatre three times a week," said Rose's companion, Philip Durand, as devoted to the elder sister as Gaston Mortemar was to the younger. "That little woman has a pleasant life of it. She has saved money in that snug little shop of hers."

"She is a vulgar coquette, and I hate the sight of her," said Rose sharply.

This was a very ill-natured speech for Rose, who was usually the soul of kindness.

"Pray what has the poor little Suzon done to offend you?" asked Gaston, laughing at Rose's impetuosity.

"It is not what she has done, but what she is. I hate bold bad women; and she is both bold and bad."

"This from you, Rose, who believe that the Gospel was something more than an epitome of the floating wisdom of the East! Have you forgotten the text, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged?'"

"When I think or speak of Suzon Michel I forget that I am a Christian," answered Rose gravely. "There is something venomous about that woman. I loathe her instinctively, as I loathe

a snake. And now, Kathleen, we must really go home."

"One more round, just one more. Hark! there is the waltz from *La Grande Duchesse*," pleaded Gaston; and, without waiting for permission, he drew his arm round Kathleen's waist, and led her into the circle in front of the flaring orchestra, under the summer stars.

CHAPTER II.

WAYSIDE FLOWERS.

THE Rue Gît le Cœur is not one of the fashionable streets of Paris. It does not belong to the English quarter, or the American quarter, or the Legitimist quarter, or the Diplomatic quarter; the quarter of Art, or Learning, or Science, or the *demi-monde.* Beauty and fashion never visit the spot. It has hardly a place on the map of Paris. And yet, like many another such street, it is a little world in itself, and human beings are born and die in it, and passions pure and holy, and base and wicked, are nourished and fostered there; and comedies and tragedies are acted there, turn by turn, as the wedding feast is spread, or the funeral drapery hung out, black and limp and dismal, against the dingy door-posts.

Gît le Cœur is a narrow shabby little street, hidden somewhere in the densely populated district between the Boulevard St. Michel and the Rue des Saints Pères. It is near the Quai des Augustins, which makes a pleasant promenade for its inhabitants on summer evenings, near the

river, within sight of the mighty towers of Notre Dame, within sound of her deep-toned bells. It is near the Morgue, and not very far from the hospitals; near the flower-market; near much that is central and busy, closely hemmed round with the teeming life of the workaday world of Paris; but very far from the haunts of pleasure, from the famous restaurants, from clubs and cafés, from parks and parterres, from opera-house and aristocratic hotel.

It is a narrow street—crooked too—and the houses are of the shabbiest. In one of these houses, a house which lay back from the street, and, with three others, formed a stony quadrangle, enclosing a little yard, dwelt Rose and Kathleen O'Hara, two sisters of Irish parentage, the daughters of a poor Irish gentleman, who had come here from the good city of Bruges in Flanders, just twelve years ago, and had occupied the same little apartment on the third story ever since. Just nineteen years ago Captain O'Hara was living with a young second wife and a seven-year-old daughter, the issue of his first marriage, in the city of Brussels. He had been in the army, in the 87th Irish Fusileers, had run through his little patrimony, and had sold his commission, and thrown himself almost penniless on the world, after the manner of many other gentlemen, Eng-

lish as well as Irish. Twice had he married in ten years, and twice for love. Nothing could have been more honourable or less prudent than either marriage; and now he was living from hand to mouth in furnished lodgings in Brussels, writing a little for the English newspapers, getting a little help now and then from his own family, and now and then a ten-pound note from a wealthy maiden aunt of his wife's—the aunt from whose handsome house in the Circus, Bath, pretty Kathleen Reilly had run away with her handsome Captain. The aunt had not forgiven or taken her back to favour; but she sent a little help occasionally, out of sheer charity, and always accompanied by a lecture which gave a flavour of bitterness to the boon.

Captain O'Hara and his wife were not unhappy, in spite of their precarious fortunes. It was summer, and the scent of the lime-blossom was in the air of the park and the boulevards; the lamplit streets and cafés were full of brightness and music in the balmy eventides of July. The young wife was looking forward tremblingly, yet hopefully, to the cares and joys of maternity. The dark-eyed stepdaughter adored her. Too young to remember her own mother, who had died in Bengal, where the girl was born, the child idolised the Captain's fair-haired wife, and was

fondly loved by her in return. Never was there a happier family group than these three, and when the expected baby should come, it was to be a boy, the Captain declared in the pride of his heart: a son and heir—heir to empty pockets, wasted opportunities, bankruptcy, and gaol. He was pining for a son to perpetuate the noble race of O'Hara. The baby was to be christened Patrick, after some famous Patrick O'Hara of days gone by, the age of war and chivalry, and poetry and pride, when Ireland had not yet yielded her sweetness to the proud invader.

Alas for the unborn child on whom such hopes had been founded, such dreams had been dreamt! The fatal day of birth came, and the child was a girl; and before the wailing infant was six days old the young fair mother, with the rippling golden hair and innocent blue eyes, was lying in her coffin, strewn with white lilies and roses, and all the purest flowers of summer-tide. The brave young heart, which had never flinched or faltered at poverty or trouble, was stilled for ever. The wife who had been content to bear Fate's worst ills with the husband of her choice was gone to the shadowy home where his love could not follow her.

Captain O'Hara never looked the world or his difficulties bravely in the face after that day. He

lived to see Kathleen a lovely girl of five years old, but he was a broken man from the day of his wife's death. He roamed from foreign town to town, living anywhere for convenience or cheapness. He spent six months at Brest, a year in Jersey, the two girls with him everywhere, nursed and cared for by Bridget Ryan, the faithful Irish maid-servant who had taken Rose from the arms of her Indian ayah, and had followed the Captain's fortunes ever since. He led a wretched out-at-elbows life, getting a little money by hook or by crook, and leaving a little train of debts behind him, like the trail of the serpent, in every town he left.

In Jersey, where cognac was conveniently cheap, the Captain took to drinking a good deal —not in dreadful drinking bouts, which would have frightened his poor children out of their senses, but in a gentle homœopathic sort of sottishness which kept his brain in a feeble state all day long, and gradually sapped his strength and his manhood. While the Captain was dawdling away his day—strolling down to the tavern or the club, lounging on the esplanade, gossipping with the goers and comers, meeting old acquaintance, and sometimes getting an invitation to dinner, with a cigarette always between his lips—the two children, of whom the elder was not eleven, and

the younger only four, used to play together all day upon the golden sands in front of their shabby lodgings, while the Irish nurse gossipped with the landlady, or sat in the sun darning and patching the children's well-worn frocks or the Captain's decaying shirts.

The two girls were happy in those sunny summer days by the sea, in spite of their poor lodgings and scanty fare. Fruit was cheap, and flowers were abundant everywhere, and there was no stint of bread and butter, and milk and eggs. The children wanted nothing better. But it was a dismal change for them when their father carried them back to Belgium, and established them in a stony street in Bruges, where the peaked roofs of the opposite houses seemed to shut out the sun, and where, instead of the sweet fresh odours of sea and seaweed, there was an everlasting stench of dried fish and sewage.

It was winter by this time, and it seemed to be the winter of their lives. Kathleen cried for the sea and the flowers of sunny Jersey. She could hardly be made to understand that summer was only a happy interval in the year, and that flowers do not grow in the stony streets of a city. The days in Bruges were cold and dismal, the evenings long and gloomy. If it had not been for Biddy Ryan the poor children might have

pined to death in their solitude. Captain O'Hara was never at home in the evening, rarely at home in the afternoon, and he never left his bed till the carillon at the cathedral had played that lovely melody of Beethoven's, "Hope told a flattering tale," which the bells rang out every day at noontide. The Captain found the café indispensable to his comfort, the *petit verre d'absinthe suisse* a necessity of his being, a game at dominoes or draughts the only distraction for the canker at his heart: thus the children, whom he loved fondly enough after his manner, were dependent on Biddy Ryan for happiness; and the faithful soul did her utmost to cheer and amuse them in their loneliness. She told them her fairy stories, the legends of her native Kerry; she described the green hills and purple mountains, the lakes, the glens and gorges, the islands and groves and abbeys, of that romantic county; until Rose, who had seen but little of the grandeur and glory of earth, longed with a passionate longing for that land of lake and mountain, which was in somewise her own land, inasmuch as her father had been born and bred within a few miles of Killarney.

"And ye'll both go there some day, my darlints," said tender-hearted Biddy, "and it's ladies ye'll be, and never a poor day ye'll know in ould Ireland; for by the Lord's grace the Captain's

rich cousins may all die off like ratten sheep, and his honour may come in for the estate? There's quarer things have happened than that in my knowledge, and sure it's great hunters the gentlemen are, and may ride home with broken necks any day."

Rose said she hoped her cousins would not die; but she wished they would ask her father and all of them to go and live at the great white house near the lakes, which Biddy described as a grander palace than the king's château at Laeken, which she and Rose had been taken to see one day with the Captain and his young wife, before Kathleen's birth.

The children were never tired of hearing Biddy talk of the lakes and mountains, the Druids' Circle, MacGillycuddy's Reeks, and the great house in which their father was born. It was their ideal of paradise, a home where sorrow or care could never enter, gardens always full of flowers, a land of everlasting summer, woods and glens peopled with fairies, skies without a cloud, gladness without alloy.

One gray hopeless afternoon, when there had not been a rift in the slate-coloured sky since daybreak, Kathleen suddenly turned from the window, against which she had been flattening her pretty little nose, in the hopeless attempt to

find amusement in looking into the empty street, and asked,

"Does it ever rain in Ireland, Biddy?"

"Yes, love, it does rain sometimes; and sure, darlint, that's why the hills and the valleys are all so soft and green. You wouldn't have it always dhry; the flowers wouldn't grow without any rain."

"Must there be rain?" inquired Kathleen simply. "Papa says I mustn't cry. Why should the sky cry. The sky is good, isn't it?"

"Yes, dear; it is God's sky."

"But papa says it's naughty to cry."

The time came only too soon when very real tears, tears of passionate grief and wild despair, were shed in that dingy Belgian lodging; and when the two children and their faithful servant found themselves alone in the bleak strange world, face to face with starvation.

The Captain caught cold one bitter February night, coming home, in the teeth of the east wind, from his favourite café; and although devotedly nursed by Biddy and Rose, who was sensible and womanly beyond her years, the cold developed into acute bronchitis, under which James O'Hara succumbed, a few days after his thirty-seventh birthday, leaving his children penni-

less and alone in the world. There were only a few francs in the Captain's purse at the time of his death; for the short sharp illness had been expensive, albeit the English doctor, a retired navy surgeon, had been most modest in his charges. The Captain's watch and signet-ring were pledged to pay for the funeral; and while the coffin was being carried to the cemetery, a letter, ill-spelt and ill-written, but full of tender womanly feeling, was on its way to the wealthy Miss Fitzpatrick of Bath, pleading for her orphaned great-niece Kathleen, and Kathleen's penniless step-sister.

Miss Fitzpatrick of Bath was a staunch Roman Catholic, and a conscientious woman; but she was not a warm-hearted woman, and she was not deeply moved by the thought of the Captain's untimely death, or of his desolate children. She had been very angry with him for running away with her niece, who was also her companion and slave; and she had never left off being angry; yet she had given him money from time to time, considering it her duty, as a rich woman, to help her poor relations. And now she was not inclined to ignore that duty, or to deny the orphans' claim.

She went over to Bruges, saw the children, and in Kathleen beheld the image of her own

dead sister's little girl as she had first seen her twenty years ago, when the orphan was sent to her rich aunt, as the legacy of a dying sister, the sole issue of a foolish marriage. And behold, here was another golden-haired child, sole issue of another foolish marriage, looking up at Theresa Fitzpatrick with just the same heaven-blue eyes, and the same scared shrinking look, as doubting whether to find a friend or a foe in the richly-clad stately dame.

If Miss Fitzpatrick had been of the melting mood, she would assuredly have taken the child to her heart and her home, and the child's dark-eyed, frank-browed, lovable step-sister with her. There was ample room for both girls in the big handsome house at Bath—empty rooms which no one ever visited save the housemaid with her brooms and brushes; luxuriously-furnished rooms, swept and garnished, and kept in spotless order for nobody.

Although there was ample room in Miss Fitzpatrick's house, there was no room in Miss Fitzpatrick's heart for two orphans.

"I shall do my duty to you, my dears," she said, "and I shall make no distinctions, although you, Rose, are no relation of mine, and have no claim upon me."

"You won't take Rose away?" cried Kath-

leen, pale with terror, the blue eyes filling with tears.

"No, my dear, I shall not separate you while you are so young," answered Miss Fitzpatrick, complacently settling herself in her sable-bordered mantle. "By and by, when you are young women, you will have to make your way in the world, and then you may be parted. But for the next few years you shall be together. How have they been educated?" she asked, appealing to Biddy, who stood by, curtsying every time the lady looked her way.

"Sure, ma'am, my lady, the Captain was very careful with them; he'd never have let the dear childer out of his sight, only he wanted a little gentlemen's society now and then, blessed soul, and he liked to spend half an hour or so at a caffy. But many's the day I've heard um reading poethry to the two childer, beautiful—Hamlick and the Ghost, and King Leerd, and Lilly O'Rourke. There never was a better father, if the Lord had been pleased to spare him," concluded Biddy, with her apron at her eyes.

"My good woman, you do not understand my question," said Miss Fitzpatrick impatiently. "I want to know what these children have been taught. I begin to fear they have been sorely

neglected by that foolish man. Can they read and write and cipher?"

Biddy, hard pushed, was fain to confess that Kathleen did not even know her letters, and that Rose was very backward with her pen, though she could read beautifully.

"I thought as much," said Miss Fitzpatrick. "And now, Bridget Ryan, I'll tell you what I mean to do: you seem to have been a faithful servant, so I shall not allow you to be a loser by Captain O'Hara's death. I shall pay you your wages in full, and send you home to Ireland."

"With the young ladies?" asked Biddy, beaming.

"What should the young ladies do in Ireland?" exclaimed Miss Fitzpatrick; "they haven't a friend in that wretched country. No, you can go back to your home, for I suppose you have some kind of home to go to. But I shall place the two young ladies in a convent I have been told about, three miles from this city, where they will be carefully educated and kindly looked after by the good nuns. I shall pay for their schooling and provide their wardrobes till they are grown up; but when they come to nineteen or twenty they will have to earn their own living. The better they are educated the easier they will find it to earn their bread."

Biddy could but confess that Miss Fitzpatrick, pon whom the elder sister had no shadow of laim, was acting very generously; yet she was in espair at the thought of being separated from ıe children she had nursed, and who were to er as her own flesh and blood. If Miss Fitz-atrick had sent them all three to Ireland, and ıven her a cottage, a potato field, and a pig, she ılt she could have worked for the two children, ıd brought them up in comfort, and been as appy as the days were long. They would have ın about the fields barefoot, and [illegible] wild un-ɔvered hair, and [illegible] friend and companion f the pig, but they would have grown up strong ıd beautiful in that free life; and it seemed to er that such a life would be ever so much appier for them than the enclosed convent in ıe flat arid country outside Bruges, the grim hite house within high walls, the tall slated roof f which she and her charges had seen one day ı their afternoon walk.

She accepted her wages from Miss Fitzpatrick, ut she declined the fare home to Ireland.

"It may be long days before I see that lessed counthry," she said, "for, with all sub-ıission to your ladyship, I shall try to get a lace in Bruges, so that I may be near these arling childer, and gladden my eyes with the

sight of them now and then, as the good nuns give lave."

Miss Fitzpatrick had no objection to this plan. She was a good woman according to her lights, but as hard as a stone. She wanted to do her duty in a prompt and business-like manner, and to provide for these orphans; not because she cared a straw for them, but because they were orphans, and to feed the widow and the orphan is the business of a good Catholic.

She put the two girls into a fly next morning, after spending an uncomfortable night at the best hotel in Bruges, where the foreign arrangements and the all-pervading odours afflicted her sorely, and drove straight off to the Sisters of Sainte Marie.

Here, in a rambling chilly-looking house, with large white-washed carpetless rooms, and corridors smelling of plaster, Miss Fitzpatrick handed the orphans over to the Reverend Mother, a stout comfortable-looking Belgian, who, for a payment in all of ninety pounds a year, was to lodge, feed, clothe, and educate the two children from January to December. There were to be no vacations—the school year was to be really a year. Children who had parents might go home for a summer holiday; but for these orphans the white-

walled convent in its flat sandy garden was to be the only home.

And now there began for those orphan sisters a new life—very strange, very cold and formal, after the life they had led with the careless yet loving father and the devoted nurse. It was a life of rule and routine, of work and deprivation. The convent school was a cheap school, and though the Sisters were conscientious in their dealings with their pupils, the fare was of the poorest, the beds were hard and narrow, the coverlets were thin, dormitories draughty and carpetless, everything bleak and bare. The children rose at unnatural hours in the cold dark mornings, and were sent to bed early to save fire and candle. It was a hard life, with scarcely a ray of sunshine. Some of the nuns were kind and some of the nuns were cross, just as women are outside convent-walls. There were no pleasures, there was very little to hope for; the nuns were too poor to afford pleasure for their pupils. Chapel and lessons, lessons and chapel; chapel twice a day, lessons all day long; that was the round of life. Half an hour's recreation now and then—just one brief half-hour of leisure and play, if the children had strength to play, after two long hours bending over books, puzzling over sums.

Rose bore her trials like a heroine. Kathleen fretted a good deal at first, and then when she grew older and stronger she became a little inclined to occasional outbreaks of rebellion. She had a sweet loving nature, and could be ruled easily by love—by threats or hard usage not at all. The nuns, happily, were fond of her, and petted her for her beauty and brightness and graceful ways. While dark proud Rose, earnest, thoughtful, laborious, plodded on at her studies, always obedient, always conscientious, Kathleen learnt by fits and starts, was sometimes attentive, sometimes neglectful, sometimes industrious to fever-point, sometimes incorrigibly idle. She had all the freaks of genius.

Life went on thus with a dismal monotony for five long years; till it seemed to the sisters as if they could never have known any world outside those convent-walls, any horizon beyond that western line of level marsh and meadow, where they used to watch the sun going down in a golden bed behind the tall black poplars. To Kathleen it seemed as if the old sweet life, with father and nurse, must have been a dream. One bitter grief had come to them in the last year. The good faithful Biddy was dead. It had been her custom to visit them on the last Saturday in every month for an hour in the afternoon, by

special permission of the Superior; and neither storm nor rain, snow nor hail, had ever kept Biddy away. Her visit was a bright spot in the lives of the girls. They clung to her and loved her in that too brief hour as if she had been verily their mother. The vulgar Irish face, the hands hardened by toil, the coarse common clothes, were, to them, as dear as if she had been the finest lady in the land. She came to them laden with fruit and cakes, and she brought them bright-coloured neck ribbons to enliven their sombre black uniform. She told them her scraps of news about the outside world. She walked with them in the garden, or sat with them in the visitors' parlour, and they were utterly happy so long as she stayed.

At last, after they had been four years and a half in the convent, there came one never to be forgotten Saturday on which there was no visitor for the Demoiselles O'Hara. It was a peerless June day, and the girls had pictured Biddy as she walked along the sandy road from Bruges, where she had a hardish place as maid-of-all-work in a Flemish tradesman's family. They fancied how she would enjoy the sunshine, and the hedges all in flower, and the song of the lark. If they could but be with her, thought Kathleen, dancing along beside her, gathering the

wild flowers! But hark! there was the convent clock striking three. In another moment the bell would ring, the loud harsh bell, which sounded so sweet upon that one particular afternoon. Biddy was the soul of punctuality. The clock had seldom finished striking before the bell rang. The girls were sitting in the garden, as near the gateway and the porter's lodge as they were allowed to go. They waited and waited, listening for the bell, which never rang; which never was again to be rung by that honest hand. At last the clock struck four, and they knew that all hope was over for that day. From three to four was the hour appointed by authority for Biddy's visit. She would not presume to come after that hour.

"There will be a letter to-morrow, perhaps," said Rose, with a sigh. "Poor dear Biddy! It is such an effort for her to write."

But the days went by, and there was no letter. The last Saturday in July came, and there had been no sign or token from Biddy. The rules of the convent school were strict, and the girls were allowed to write to no one except relations.

That last Saturday in July was a dull stormy day, a sullen sultry day, with heavy thunder showers. Again the two girls pictured their friend upon the sandy road, this time wrapped in her

Irish frieze cloak, the countrywoman's cloak which she had worn ever since Rose could remember, and struggling against the storm with her stout Belgian umbrella of dark-red cotton. But the clock struck three, and the clock struck four, the girls waiting through the hour with listening ears and beating hearts, and there was no touch of Bridget Ryan's hand upon the convent bell.

Then Rose grew desperate, and went straight to the Reverend Mother, and asked permission to write to Bridget, who must be ill, or surely she would have come. The superior hesitated a little; rules were strict, and if once broken—and so on and so on. But the pale anxious face and tearful eyes touched her, and she gave the required permission and the necessary postage-stamp.

Three days Rose and Kathleen waited anxiously for the reply to their letter, and then came a formal epistle from a lawyer in Bruges, who had the honour to acquaint the young ladies that their late father's old servant, Madame Ryan, had died at midnight on the last Saturday in June, after a very short illness, and that she had bequeathed the whole of her savings to Mademoiselle Rose O'Hara, said savings amounting, after payment of funeral expenses, to five hundred and fifty francs.

Deep and bitter was the grief of the sisters at the loss of this faithful friend—the only woman

friend whose warm motherly love Kathleen had ever known. Rose gave a hundred francs to the Reverend Mother to be spent in masses for the beloved dead. Kathleen wanted her to devote all the money to that sacred purpose.

"What do we want with the poor darling's money?" she asked.

"Nothing now, dear," answered the more experienced elder sister; "but the day may come when a little money will save us from a good deal of misery."

The day came when those few gold pieces, which Rose kept under lock and key with all her little treasures in a small japanned box that had belonged to her father, made the two girls independent of tyranny, or of that which seemed to them as tyranny of an altogether unbearable kind.

The good Reverend Mother, under whose firm but friendly rule Rose and Kathleen had grown up, one to a tall well-developed girl of eighteen, the other to a slim sapling of eleven, was transferred to a larger and wealthier convent, and was replaced by a sour-visaged nun whose piety was of the gloomy order, and who wanted to rule the community with a rod of iron. Everything was changed under her dominion, every rule made more severe, every little innocent pleasure curtailed or forbidden. A dark pall came down

upon the convent, and discontent brooded like an evil presence by the hearth.

Kathleen, in high health, active, full of life and spirits, was one of the first to break the new rules. Her gaiety was misconduct, her fresh ringing laugh an offence. She was continually getting into disgrace; and Rose, who saw her punished by all sorts of small privations and by the burden of extra tasks, rebelled in her heart against the tyrant, although she urged her young sister to submission and obedience.

There came a day—a bright summer day—when the punishment lesson was heavier than usual, although Kathleen's offence had been of the slightest kind.

"Kathleen O'Hara has an obstinate temper, and it must be conquered," said the reverend mother, when she was told of a blotted exercise or a little outbreak of temper.

To-day Kathleen had a headache. She was flushed and feverish, overcome by the midsummer heat. Just a year had gone since Bridget's death, and it seemed to both girls as if that year had been the longest in their lives—the longest and most unhappy. The child made a feeble effort to write the German exercise which had been given to her as a punishment task; but soon gave up altogether, and sat crying, with the book open

before her, and the sun pouring its fierce light upon her flushed tear-stained face.

This was taken for rank contumacy, and when the Reverend Mother came upon her round of inspection from a superior class, she ordered Kathleen off to a room at the top of the house, a bare garret under the thin hot roof, which was used only for solitary confinement in very bad cases. It was the blackhole of the convent.

Kathleen was marched up to this place of durance vile, and kept there till evening prayers, with the refreshment of a slice of black bread—such bread as the coachmen give their horses in that country—and a cup of water. In the cool eventide she was let out of her prison, which had been like an oven all day, and she and Rose lay down together side by side in their narrow beds at the end of the long dormitory, nearest the door.

When all the others were asleep Rose knelt by her sister's bed, and kissed and comforted her; but the child was broken-hearted. She said she would die in that miserable house. Lessons were given to her which she could not learn, and then she was punished for not learning them. She had been frightened in that dreadful room. She had heard things—awful things—running about

behind the walls, squeaking and screaming. She thought they were demons.

"They were rats, darling," said Rose, caressing and soothing her. "You shall never, never be put in that room again, if you will be brave, and trust me."

Rose shuddered at the thought of that stifling garret, under the burning roof, and the rats running about behind the wainscot. She had heard of children being eaten alive by rats.

"Shall we steal out of the house to-morrow morning as soon as it is light, and go away and live by ourselves somewhere?" she asked, in a whisper.

It was an hour after bed-time; the other children were all snoring on their hard little bolsters. There was no one to overhear the sisters as they whispered and plotted. It was no new thought with Rose O'Hara. She had been meditating upon it for a long time, ever since the new rule had begun and had made Kathleen unhappy. She had never forgotten those words of Miss Fitzpatrick's: "When you are grown up you will have to get your own living, and then you may have to be parted." The very thought of severance from Kathleen, this only beloved of her heart, was despair. Rose made up her mind that there should be no such parting. Why should they not

work and live together? Rose felt herself strong and brave, and able to work for both. She had wasted no opportunity that the convent afforded her. She had learnt all that her teachers had given her to learn, and now felt herself able to teach as she had been taught. If Miss Fitzpatrick were left free to plan their lives, she and her sister would be parted; but if she took their fate into her own hands, they could spend their lives together—prosper or fail together; and, in her young hopefulness, it seemed to her that failure was hardly possible.

She whispered the plan to Kathleen. They were to get up at daybreak—at the first glimmer of light—dress themselves, and creep out of the dormitory and down the stair, with their shoes in their hands. The door opening into the garden was bolted only. They had nothing to do but draw back the heavy bolts noiselessly. The garden was guarded by high walls, except in one weak point which the girls knew well. An older wall, only eight feet high—a ponderous old wall, with heavy buttresses of crumbling brick—divided the western side of the garden from an extensive orchard sloping down to the river.

This wall had been scaled by many a young rebel, in quest of plums and pears, and it would be no obstacle to the sisters' escape. Rose would

take a change of linen in a little bundle, and her fortune of fifteen gold pieces, Biddy's legacy, in her pocket; and with this stock of worldly wealth they would make their way to Paris, that wonderful, beautiful city, of which they had heard so much from some of their schoolfellows, the daughters of Parisian tradesmen, who had been sent to the Belgian convent for cheapness.

"Are we going to walk all the way?" asked Kathleen.

"Not all the way, darling. We can go by rail. But if we find the journey would cost us too much we might walk part of the way."

"I will walk as far as you like; I am not afraid," said Kathleen.

Their scheme prospered. In the dewy morning they climbed the crumbling orchard-wall, where there was plenty of foothold on the broken bricks, and ran across the wet grass to the edge of the river, following which they came to the high-road. They avoided Bruges, the city of church towers, and steep roofs, and many bridges, and made for the road to Courtrai. Their first day's journey of fifteen miles was over a dusty road—long, dreary, monotonous—a long and weary walk; but they rested on the way at a cottage, where they enjoyed a meal of bread and fruit which cost them only a few pence. Not for

years had they so relished any feast as they enjoyed this dinner of black bread and black cherries, which they ate in a little arbour covered with a hop-vine, in a corner of the cottage garden. They were three days on the road to Courtrai, sleeping in humble cottages, and living on the humblest fare. At the railway-station at Courtrai Rose found that the price of railway tickets to Paris, even the cheapest they could buy, would make a great hole in their little fortune; so she and Kathleen decided that they would walk all the way. It was a long journey, but not so long as that of the Scotch girl whom Rose had read about in Sir Walter Scott's story.

"I should like to walk," said Kathleen. "I have been so happy to-day—no lessons, no one to scold us. The sky, and the flowers, and the fields all to ourselves."

Rose found a decent lodging for the night in a weaver's cottage, and they started next morning on the road to Paris, Kathleen as merry as a lark, Rose happy, but with a grave sense of responsibility.

They were weeks upon the road, in the balmy summer weather, walking and walking, on and on, under a cloudless blue sky; for the heavens favoured them, and the peerless July weather lasted all through their journey, save on one day

when they were caught in a thunderstorm, and had to take refuge in a deserted stable, where they sat crouched together in a dark corner, while the thunder rolled over the broken thatch, and the lightning sent lances of fire zigzagging across the dusky gloom.

They were often very tired; they were often half choked and half blinded by the chalky dust of the long level roads; but they were happy; for they were together, and they were free. It was the first real holiday they had known since they had entered at the convent gate. No lessons, no burdens of any kind. Every day they knelt in the cool shade of some strange church to pray. They heard the mass sung by strange priests before village altars. They found friends at the cottages where they lodged. The women all admired Kathleen's golden hair and blue eyes, and sympathised with the sisters when told that they were orphans beginning the world together. No one overcharged or robbed them. They were treated generously everywhere. Their very defencelessness was their shield and breastplate.

And thus through toil, that had none of the bitterness of toil, they slowly approached the great city, which to their young imaginations was like a fairy city. They did not quite believe that the streets were paved with gold, but they fancied life

would be very easy there, and that their hearts would be always light enough to enjoy the sparkle of the fountains, the glory of the broad strong river, the perfume of flowers, the beautiful churches and beautiful theatres, and shining lamp-lit boulevards, about which their schoolfellows had told them so much.

CHAPTER III.

KATHLEEN'S LOVER.

THE first sensation with both sisters, when they came within view of the mighty city, was disappointment. Rose felt her heart sink within her. The houses were so high, the streets so long and dreary; the city seemed a wilderness of stone and plaster. All the trees on the boulevards—those long new boulevards by which they entered Paris —were white with dust, and had a withered look. The houses had a poverty-stricken air, despite their size and newness. They looked like big white gaols. As for flowers or fountains, parks or gardens, there was no sign of any such thing.

"What an ugly place!" cried Kathleen piteously. "Those girls at the convent must have been horrid storytellers."

They tramped on and on, till at last they came to the heart of the town, to the place of fountains and palaces and gardens and flowers. It was in the summer sunset. All things were gilded by that western radiance. Soldiers were

marching along the Rue de Rivoli, drums beating, trumpets blaring. Lamps were lit in all the cafés, crowds of people were sitting about in the open streets, the concerts in the Champs Elysées were beginning their music and song, myriad little lampions shining and twinkling in the last rays of the sun. Cleopatra's Needle, fountains, palace, soldiers, statues, trees, flowers, all fused themselves into one dazzling picture before the eyes of the two bewildered wearied young travellers.

"Oh Rose, how beautiful! how beautiful!" gasped Kathleen, breathless with rapture. "How happy we shall be here!"

But while they stood admiring the fountains, listening to the martial music, the shades of evening were descending, and they had still to find a shelter for the night. Useless to look for such a shelter in this region of palaces. Rose took her sister by the hand and walked on, trusting to Fate to carry them to some humble district, where they might find friends and economical fare, as they had done everywhere on the way, thanks to Rose's instinct for discovering the fittest places, the right people.

Stars were beginning to flash and tremble upon the blue river as the orphans went over the bridge beyond the Louvre into that poorer Paris on the

left bank of the Seine. Here they roamed about in the twilight till they drifted somehow into the Rue Gît le Cœur; and at the door of one of the shabby old houses saw a fat middle-aged matron, with a good-natured face, of whom she asked for advice as to a lodging.

The matron heard her story, and at once spread her motherly wing over both girls. There was a *garni*, a furnished third floor in the middle house in the yard. The rooms were small: just two little rooms and a tiny closet for kitchen; quite big enough for two girls. She led the way, introduced Rose to the *concierge*—whose husband was a shoemaker, occupying the basement of the house—and who went panting up the narrow stair, key in hand, to show the lodging.

It was very small, very shabby; and cheap although it was, the rent seemed a great deal to Rose, after her experience of village lodgings on the way; but her new friend told her she might walk miles and get nothing so cheap in all Paris; so she took heart, and hired the apartment for a month certain, paying the fifth of her golden pieces, of which she had spent just four upon the road, as an instalment of the rent. And then, still directed by her stout friend, she went to a *crêmerie* round the corner, and bought some milk and rolls and a little cheese for supper; and the

sisters sat down in their new home, so bare of many things essential for comfort, and laughed and cried over their first meal in Paris. Kathleen was almost hysterical with fatigue and excitement. All the way they had come, even in the midst of her girlish gladness, she had been haunted by fears of pursuit. The Reverend Mother would send the gardener after her, and have her taken back and shut up in the sun-baked room where the rats lived.

"But now we are safe," she said, with her head on her sister's shoulder, and Rose's arm round her, "we are safe in Paris; and if Reverend Mother sends after us, we'll go to the Emperor and ask him to take care of us. We are his subjects now." This was in '62, when the Empire was in its glory, and there was a sense of power and splendour in the third Napoleon's dominion over this beautiful modern Babylon, such as must have been felt in Rome under the politic sway of Augustus. These girls felt as if they were in a fortress, now they were within the charmed circle of imperial magnificence.

Years of struggle and poverty and industry and self-denial came after that happy evening when the girls sat in the twilight, dreaming of a bright future; but though the training was severe, it was, perhaps, the best and noblest school in

which humanity can be educated. The sisters were never unhappy, for they were together, and they were free. Rose was sister, mother, guardian, all the world of love and shelter for Kathleen, who bloomed into exquisite loveliness in that humble Parisian lodging, a fair flower blossoming unseen, with, happily, few to note her beauty.

Rose found only too soon that education was a drug in the Parisian markets. After heroic efforts to get employment as a morning governess in a tradesman's family, she fell back upon the only industry which offered itself, and, by the help of her first Parisian friend, Madame Schubert, the stout matron who had found her a lodging, she got employment as an artificial flower-maker, in which art she progressed rapidly, and, in a couple of years, attained a perfection which insured her liberal wages—wages which enabled her to maintain the little lodging, and feed and clothe herself and her sister. The fare was of the simplest, and there was a good deal of pinching needed to make both ends meet in that luxurious expensive city of Paris; especially in winter, when fuel made such an inroad upon the slender purse; but somehow the girls never knew actual privation, never went to bed hungry, or were haunted in their slumber by the nightmare of debt. The little rooms on the third story were

the pink of neatness. Kathleen was housekeeper, and her busy hands swept and dusted and polished, and kept all things bright. The modest gray or brown merino gowns were never shabby or dilapidated. Collars and cuffs were always spotless, and the little feet neatly shod. There were always a few halfpence for the bag at Notre Dame, and there was always a loaf to divide with a poor neighbour, or a cup of soup for a sick child.

On the other hand, the pleasures of the sisters were of the rarest, and, perhaps, that is why they were so sweet. A steamboat excursion once or twice in a long summer to some suburban village that was almost the country; a visit to a cheap boulevard theatre once or twice in the long winter. But O, how heavenly was the scent of lime blossoms, how exquisite the verdure of summer meadows, to those who tasted the luxury so seldom! And how vivid and real was that sham world of the stage to those who so seldom saw the curtain rise upon that paint and tinsel paradise!

Rose and Kathleen lived as humbly as grisettes live, and dressed as grisettes dress; but they preserved the secluded habits of English ladies—knew no one, and spoke to no one, outside the narrow enclosure of that little stone-

paved yard in the Rue Gît le Cœur, with its three houses divided into about twenty domiciles. Among these dwellings the sisters had made a few respectable acquaintances, including Madame Schubert, the stout matron who grew more and more obese as the years went by, who was described somewhat vaguely as a *petit rentier*, and whose only business in life was to know the business of her neighbours, and to attend upon an ancient coffee-coloured pug almost as obese as herself.

As she was their first, so was Madame Schubert their best and most intimate friend, and, indeed, the one only person whom the Demoiselles O'Hara visited and received in this vast city of Paris. She was always their companion and protectress in those happy excursions to the country, those fairylike nights at the theatre. It was she who supplied the secluded damsels with news of the outside world. She knew, or pretended to know, everything that was going on in Paris; and she certainly did know everything that went on in the Rue Gît le Cœur.

It was Madame, or in familiar parlance Maman, Schubert who gave Rose and Kathleen the first information about a new lodger who had taken up his abode in the two little garrets over

their own apartment—a young man with a handsome face, and *gentil*—ah, but how *gentil! tout-à-fait talon rouge.* He would bear comparison with any *gandin* on the boulevard, although his coat looked as if it had been well worn, and all his worldly goods consisted of one battered portmanteau and an old egg-box full of books.

"He writes for the papers—for the *Drapeau Rouge*," said Maman Schubert. "I have seen the printer's devil going up-stairs with proofs. But he is not rich, this youth, for he breakfasts at Suzon Michel's *crêmerie*, and he often buys a slice of Lyons sausage and a loaf as he goes home in the afternoon, when other young men are going to their favourite restaurant."

"Dear maman, how is it that you know everything about everybody?" exclaimed Rose.

She had met the new lodger on the stairs that morning, and could not deny his good looks. He was tall and slim. He had dark eyes—eagle eyes—and a black moustache, and features as clearly cut as a profile on a Roman cameo.

"I have eyes and ears, and a heart to sympathise with my neighbours in their joys and sorrows," said Madame Schubert. "One might as well be the statue of King Henry on the Pont Neuf as go through the world caring for nobody but oneself."

This was a clever way of making a feminine vice seem a virtue; but Maman Schubert was really a good soul, and always ready to help a poor neighbour. She was very fond of the O'Hara girls, and already she had begun to build her little castles in the air for their benefit. Rose was to marry Philip, that honest young mechanic from the far south, beyond Carcassonne, who was doing so well as a journeyman cabinet-maker, and who was something of an artist in his way, and thus a little above the average mechanic. And now here there had dropped from the sky, as it were, the very lover of lovers for Kathleen—young, handsome, refined, as charming as a lover in a play.

Maman Schubert told herself it was high time Kathleen should have a lover, whose duty it would be to protect and cherish her, and to marry her so soon as ever they were rich enough to marry. She was much too pretty to remain unguarded by a strong man's love. For such fresh and innocent loveliness Paris was full of snares; she could not go the length of a street alone without encountering perils. The wolf was always on the watch for this lamb. Rose O'Hara's avocations compelled her to be absent all day long, and she was obliged to mew her young sister in the little sitting-room, forbidding her to

go a step beyond her daily marketing within a narrow radius of the Rue Gît le Cœur.

The wolf, as represented by the *gandin* or *petit crevé*, was not often on the prowl in this humble locality. The pavements were too rough for his dainty boots, the region altogether too shabby for his magnificence. But from the Sorbonne, from the Luxembourg, and from the Hôtel Dieu issued wolves of another and rougher species —students of all kinds; and Rose lived in ever-present fear lest one of these should assail her cherished lamb. Maman Schubert was often too lazy to go marketing; and then Kathleen must needs go alone on her little errands to the greengrocer, or the pork-butcher, or the *crêmerie.*

The *crêmerie* was just round the corner—one of the neatest daintiest little shops in Paris, or at least it was so thought by the inhabitants of Gît le Cœur, who patronised it liberally. It was a tiny shop in a narrow street, and one descended to it by two stone steps, trodden hollow and sloping by pilgrims in past ages; for the shop was an old shop, coeval with the departed glories of the Faubourg St. Germain. It was cellar-like and dark, but that was an advantage on a hot summer day. It was cool and shadowy, like a rustic dairy, and it was clean—ah, how it was clean! You might have offered a napoleon for every

cobweb to be found in Suzon Michel's shop, without fear of being out of pocket by your offer. The little tables at which Suzon's customers breakfasted were of spotless marble. Her thick white crockery had never a stain or a smear. Her brass milk-cans and tin coffee-pots were as bright as silver in a silversmith's shop.

It was in this half-underground apartment that Gaston Mortemar, the young journalist, took his breakfast every day—coffee and eggs, roll and butter, occasionally diversified by a plate of radishes.

This simple and wholesome fare was enlivened by the society of Madame Michel, a buxom black-eyed widow of six-and-twenty, who had always the last news of the quarter, and a cheery word for every comer, and who found a great deal to say to this particular customer. She stood behind her bright little counter, flashing her knitting-needles, or moved deftly about the shop, polishing and arranging her pots and pans, while Gaston Mortemar breakfasted, and that hour seemed to her always the brightest in the day. By the time he had lived six months in the Rue Gît le Cœur, they were on very intimate terms. She used to upbraid him if he were five minutes later than his usual hour, and she would pout and look sorrowful if he seemed in haste to depart. Once

she served him a better breakfast than he had ordered, and wanted to supply him with a dainty dish gratis; but Monsieur Mortemar drew the line here. His angry flush and haughty frown told the little widow that she had gone too far.

"Please to remember that I am a gentleman, and not a *pique-assiette*," he said, "and that I eat nothing I cannot pay for."

Madame shrugged her shoulders, and said it was hard she could not offer an *omelette aux points d'asperges* to a friend if she liked.

"When I visit my friends I take what they choose to give me," answered Gaston coldly; "but I have no friends in this part of Paris."

Suzon Michel looked as black as thunder, and took the journalist's money in sulky silence. She broke a jug before dinner-time, and was snappish to her customers all the rest of the day.

"What Satan-like pride!" she exclaimed thinking of her favourite patron; and then she muttered a remark which might have found a place later in the columns of the *Père Duchêne*.

She cried when she went to bed that night, cried and sobbed, and swore an oath or two by way of solace, before she laid her head on her pillow, thinking that Gaston Mortemar would come no more to the little table at the end of the shop. But at the usual time he walked into

her shop, and sat himself down with an imperturbable visage. She served his coffee as carefully as ever, but said never a word. He read a newspaper while he breakfasted, paid, and went, without a word on his part.

Next morning there was a bunch of daffodils on the little table, a bunch of yellow bloom lighting up the shadowy corner. Suzon had trudged to the flower-market before she opened her shop, to buy these spring flowers for the man she loved. Yes, she loved him, and meant to marry him if she could. He was a gentleman, and she *canaille de canaille.* But what of that? Did not the gutter throne it yonder on the other side of the Seine, in the Bois, in the Parc Monceau—the gutter made glorious in silks and satins, driving thoroughbred horses, scattering their lovers' substance in waves of gold? Did not all that was noblest in the land lay itself down and grovel at the feet of the gutter? And her gentleman was poor and friendless; he lived in a garret, and toiled for a pittance. Surely he would be willing and glad to marry her, when he knew that she had saved money, and had her little investments in the public funds.

He smiled at sight of the first flowers of spring, and, looking up at the widow, saw that she was smiling too. All her sullen gloom had

melted at sight of him. She was so glad he had not forsaken her shop. Perhaps it would have hurt her even more than his desertion to have known how insignificant a figure she made in his life, and how little he had thought about yesterday's dispute.

He asked her the news, and her whole face beamed at the sound of his voice. She prattled away gaily for the rest of the hour, and considered every other customer an intruder while Gaston sat at his little table.

"You ought to put up a placard in your window, with 'Relâche' upon it, when Monsieur is here," said a grumpy porter, to whom she had served a pat of butter with scant civility, and whose keen eye saw the state of affairs.

This kind of thing went on for more than a year. Now and again, when Gaston was in luck and had made a few francs more than his ordinary earnings from the newspapers, he rewarded the little widow's attentions by taking her to a theatre, and giving her an ice or a supper in the Passage Jouffroy before he escorted her home. He treated her *en grand seigneur* on these occasions, and these evenings were to Suzon Michel as nights spent in paradise; hours to dream about for weeks after they were gone, to long for with a passionate longing. Yet they

brought her no nearer to the man she loved or to the realisation of her hopes. Not a word was ever spoken of love or marriage. When they parted on the steps of the *crêmerie*, while the bells of Notre Dame were chiming one of the quarters after midnight, they were as far apart as ever. If she was ever to be Madame Mortemar the offer of marriage must come from her own lips, Suzon thought; and she would not have shrunk from telling the man of her choice of those snug little investments, and her willingness to share her economies with him. Feminine delicacy would not have hindered such an avowal; but there was something in the man himself which sealed her lips.

Gaston was as cold as ice, as calm as marble. He had that amiable languor of speech and manner which clever young men are apt to affect, until it becomes a second nature. He talked like a man who had lived through every experience that life could offer to reprobate youth, who had grown old in evil before Time had written a wrinkle on his brow.

"Ah, but he has lived, that youth!" said the knowing ones of the quarter. "He has squandered the paternal fortune on actresses and cocottes, and now he has to write for his bread."

The fact was that Gaston Mortemar had

never had a napoleon to bestow upon anybody, for good or evil. He had worked for his daily bread ever since he left the school of Albert the Great, where he had been one of the brightest pupils of the good Dominicans. He had never been rich enough to be profligate in a grand way; and he was too proud, too refined to stoop to cheap vice. He was, like Alfred de Musset, a dandy born, created with refined tastes and lofty aspirations; but poverty had embittered him. He had fed his mind with the writings of Villon and Voltaire and Rousseau, Théophile Gautier, Musset, Baudelaire, and Flaubert. He was a cynic to the marrow of his bones. He tried to surpass Voltaire in acrimony, Rousseau in discontent, and lashed himself into fury when he wrote about the great ones of the earth.

One day he met Kathleen O'Hara in the morning sunshine, coming in from her marketing, just as he was going out to breakfast, with a neat gray gown and a pale-blue neck-ribbon, and a basket of lettuce and radishes on her arm; and he thought he saw à Greuze that had suddenly become flesh and blood, and had walked out of its frame in the Louvre yonder, across the shining river. He forgot his good manners, and turned to look after her as she crossed the yard and tripped up the steps of that house which he

had just left. He knew that two girls occupied one half of the third story, but they had kept themselves so close that he had only seen the elder sister, once in a way, on the staircase. Madame Schubert was standing in her doorway, scenting the morning air, and watching the goings and comings of her neighbours. She and Gaston had long been on friendly terms, so she gave him a little nod, and laughed as he passed her door.

"*Gentille, n'est-ce pas, mon garçon?*" she screamed, in her shrill treble, with the Boulevard St. Michel twang.

"*Gentille!* She is adorable," answered Gaston. "Is it possible that such an angel inhabits the same dull walls that shelter me?"

"Dangerous, is it not? But she is as good as she is pretty. A gentleman's daughter too, though she and her sister have to work for their bread, poor orphans. The father was an Irish captain."

"Irish!" exclaimed Gaston, with a touch of surprise.

He had a vague idea that Irish men and women were a kind of savages who inhabited a barren island on the wild Atlantic, and ran about half-naked among the rocks.

"Yes, but these girls have never been in Ire-

land. They were educated in a convent near Bruges. They are young ladies, pious, well-conducted, although they work for their daily bread. Durand, my neighbour, the young cabinet-maker, is over head and ears in love with the elder sister, and I think there will be a marriage before long."

"Durand! What, the sturdy broad-shouldered youth at No. 7, who whistles and sings so loud as he goes in and out?"

"Yes; a fine frank nature."

"Noisy enough, in all conscience," said Gaston; and he went on to get his breakfast.

He was in no humour for conversation this morning, and Suzon Michel's prattle bored him. He read, or seemed to be reading, the *Figaro* while she was talking—a rudeness which galled the widow.

"Do you know those two young ladies in the Rue Gît le Cœur, the house I live in?" he asked presently, without looking up from his paper.

"Young ladies!" echoed Suzon contemptuously. "A gentleman may live in the Rue Gît le Cœur, a gentleman may live anywhere, that is understood; but young ladies—that is too much! I know two girls who work for the artificial flower-maker on the Boulevard St. Germain."

"They are ladies by birth and education, I am told."

"They are stuck-up minxes; and although that young one has come to my shop every day for the last six years she does not think me worthy of five minutes' conversation; a little nod and '*Bon-jour*, madame,' and she's out of my shop as if she thought the place polluted her."

"She is shy, perhaps," said Gaston. "I should not think she could be proud."

Suzon looked at him sharply with those flashing eyes of hers—fine eyes, full, black, luminous, but not altogether beautiful.

"What does monsieur know of this young person that he is so ready to answer for her?" she asked, with a mocking air.

"Very little. I passed her in the street just now. I doubt if I ever saw her till that moment, though we live in the same house. Some faces can be read at a glance. In hers I saw purity, sweetness, truth, simplicity."

"My faith! You are skilful at reading faces," retorted Madame Michel; "but it is easy to see virtues of that kind in a pretty woman. Had Ma'mselle Hara been ugly you would not have discovered half these qualities in her face."

"They might have been there, perhaps; but I own I should not have looked so keenly. She

is the image of a Greuze in the Louvre. You know the pictures in the Louvre?"

"Not much," said Suzon, with a careless shrug.

"Why, you go there nearly every Sunday afternoon."

"True; but I go to look at the people, not the pictures."

Gaston paid for his breakfast, and strolled on to his newspaper-office, thinking that Suzon grew more vulgar every day. He was vexed with himself for having allowed her to establish a kind of friendship with him. She! the keeper of a milk shop!

"And to think that I come from one of the best families in Brittany," he said to himself. "Well, I have thrown my lot in with the people. I have made myself their advocate; I have asserted the equal rights of man. Ought I to feel offended if a milk woman treats me as her friend? A handsome woman, too; bright, agreeable, not without intelligence, and full of strong feeling. Poor little Suzon!"

Poor little Suzon! Gaston began to lessen his visits to the *crêmerie*. He took a cup of coffee in his garret, and went straight to his day's work. He was too busy to breakfast in the old leisurely manner, he told Madame Michel, when

she reproached him with this falling off from the old ways.

"Have I done anything to offend you?" she asked, looking at him with eyes which took a new beauty, softened by sadness.

"Offend me, dear Madame Michel! But assuredly not. You are all that is good. But I am working hard just now. It does not do for a man to saunter through life, to be always a trifler. I have a good deal to do for the paper; and I spend an hour or two every day at the Imperial Library."

"If you are getting a learned man I shall see no more of you," sighed the widow. "You will not be able to endure my ignorant chatter."

"Gaiety of heart is delightful at all times," said Gaston.

"I begin to think that monsieur must be writing verses, he has grown so grave and silent," remarked Suzon.

And then they parted, with ceremonious politeness on his side, with keen scrutiny and suspicion on hers.

Monsieur was not writing verses, but he was living a poem. Maman Schubert, the good-natured busybody of the Rue Gît le Cœur, had planned a little tea-party—*un thé à l'Anglaise*—

and had invited the two O'Hara girls—known in their little circle as the Demoiselles Hara, since the O was too much for a Parisian mouth—and Philip Durand, the cabinet-maker, an honest young fellow, a thorough workman and artist, in a very artistic trade, and a prominent member of the workmen's syndicate: and the cabinet-makers' syndicate ranks high among the societies of French workmen. So far the party consisted of old friends, since good Madame Schubert had been almost as a mother to the girls whom she had seen arrive in the Rue Gît le Cœur, dusty and bewildered-looking, on the evening of their entry into Paris, and Philip had been Rose's devoted lover for the last three years, haunting her like her shadow as she went to and fro her work, in the early mornings when Paris was being swept and garnished, in the dusky evenings when its million lamps were being lighted. Never was there a more unselfish, a more patient wooer. Rose had been hard with him; Rose had kept him at arm's length. She never meant to marry. She had her mission in life; and that mission was to take care of Kathleen.

"Will you be less able to guard her when you have a strong man to help you?" asked Philip. "Do you suppose I shall grudge her a room in our lodgings, a place at our table? She

will be my sister as much as yours, and as dear to me as to you."

"That cannot be. She is more than a sister to me. She is the one love and care of my life. Work would lose all its sweetness if I did not know I was working for her as well as for myself. I am sure you are good and generous. I daresay you would be kind to her; but you might grow weary of her; bad times might come, and you might think her a burden. I will run no risks. I should feel as if I were giving her a step-father."

"And have you made up your mind never to marry?"

"Never, while Kathleen is single. If she were well married it might be different."

"Then it shall be my business to find her a good husband," said Philip. "With such a pretty girl there can be no difficulty."

But Philip Durand was a poor hand at match-making. While he was thinking about the business, and wondering which of the men he rubbed shoulders with at the workmen's chamber was worthy to mate with Rose O'Hara's sister, Madame Schubert, who was an incorrigible schemer in the matrimonial line, had brought Kathleen face to face with the man whom Fate meant for her husband.

The fourth guest and only stranger at Madame Schubert's English tea was Gaston Mortemar; and that evening completed Kathleen's conquest. He was her adorer and her slave from that hour. It seemed to him as if all life took new colours after that evening. The leopard cannot change his spots all at once; but the leopard's ways and manners may be considerably influenced; and although Gaston was still Voltairian in his way of thinking, still a leveller in politics, he worked more earnestly and more honestly than he had ever done before; for he had assumed the responsibility of winning a bright future for Kathleen O'Hara.

The wooing and winning were easily done, for the girl's young heart went out to him as Gretchen's to Faust. A little walk on the bridge in the summer twilight, a flower or two—bought in the flower-market, but cherished as if it were a blossom of supernal growth—a chance meeting in the sunny morning, when Kathleen was marketing, and these two were pledged to each other for life. But Rose was terribly wise. She seemed the very spirit of worldliness, and she refused her consent to an imprudent marriage. When Gaston had saved a little money, and could earn, say, three napoleons a week—which was less than the skilled cabinet-maker earned—Kathleen should be

his wife; not sooner. Gaston was earning on an average two napoleons weekly, and there was not much margin for saving out of that.

Hitherto he had found himself just able to live, clothe himself like a gentleman, and keep out of debt. And to do even this he had been thrifty and self-denying. But what will not love do? He became as sparing as Père Grandet; except when he wanted to offer a little pleasure, a theatre or a café chantant, to the sisters.

Such offers were but rarely accepted. Rose watched Kathleen like a lynx, and allowed few *tête-à-têtes* between the lovers. Never was girlish simplicity guarded more closely from all peril of pollution. But, once in a way, this severe damsel relented so far as to allow the two lovers to organise an evening's dissipation; and it was on one of these occasions, almost immediately after Kathleen's engagement, that Suzon Michel saw Gaston and his sweetheart together for the first time.

It was a sultry August evening, the Seine shining in the golden light of the western sky, the air heavy with heat. Durand and Gaston had bought tickets for the side-boxes at the Ambigu, where a new play, by Dumas the younger, was being acted, to the delight of all Paris—or, at least, that inferior and second-rate Paris which

had not migrated to fashionable watering-places and mountain springs. Kathleen and Gaston walked arm-in-arm along the quay, so engrossed in each other as to be quite unconscious of passers-by. Faces came and went beside them, voices sounded; but it was all dim as the sounds and faces in a dream. They lived, they saw, they heard, they breathed only for each other.

Close behind them came Rose and her faithful swain; and Rose, even in her tenderest moments, was mindful of her sister. She was fond and proud of her stalwart, good-looking workman-lover, who was so fine a specimen of his rank and race, as much a gentleman by nature as Gaston Mortemar was a gentleman by hereditary instinct; but she was not lifted off this dull earth by her love.

As they walked towards the Pont Neuf, with their faces to the west and the sun shining on them, Suzon Michel met them. She saw them ever so far off: the tall slight figure of the man, whose look and bearing she knew so well; the golden-haired girl at his side, radiant and lovely in her plain alpaca gown, and neat little black lace bonnet, with clusters of violets nestling between the lace and her sunny hair—those violets which the auburn-haired Empress loved so well.

Suzon slackened her pace as they drew near

her. He would recognise her, of course—the false-hearted one; and speak her fair, albeit he had broken her heart by his coldness and ingratitude. He would stop, the audacious one, and brazen out his treachery, and make light of his heartlessness.

But Gaston walked on without seeing her. He passed her by, unconscious of her presence, his eyes bent with impassioned love upon the pure pale face beside him, his lips breathing softest words. Suzon drew aside, and stood upon the pavement, looking after them with diabolical hate in her face. Rose saw that look, and clutched Philip Durand's arm.

"Did you see that woman looking after my sister—the woman at the *crêmerie?*" she asked.

But Philip had been too much absorbed in his betrothed to have eyes for the divers expressions of the passers by. He was full of gladness, thankfulness for his lot. He had been eminently successful as a craftsman, had won a medal for a piece of fine workmanship in the Exhibition of '67; he was looked upon as a leading light in the syndicate, and the dearest woman in the world had promised to be his wife. Now that Kathleen was engaged there was no more difficulty. So soon as Gaston was in a fair way

to maintain a wife, the two couples would be united.

The evening at the Ambigu was enchantment; but both girls refused the luxury of ices at Tortoni's. How were lovers to be thrifty if their betrothed were ready to accept costly attentions? Besides, as they passed the famous confectioner's, Rose caught sight of a couple of carriages setting down some ladies and their cavaliers at a side door, and those painted faces and rustling silks belonged to a world from which Rose O'Hara recoiled as from a pestilence. So they all walked home in the August moonlight, talking of the play, and were safe in the Rue Gît le Cœur before midnight.

Rose did not forget that look of Madame Michel's. Her intense affection for Kathleen made her suspicious of Kathleen's lover. Such a look as that in a young woman's face could but have one meaning. It meant jealousy; and there could hardly be jealousy without cause. The look suggested a history, and Rose set herself to find out that history. She consulted Madame Schubert, the one friend whom she could trust in so delicate a matter, and the good Schubert was not long in enlightening her. One does not live in such a place as the Rue Gît le

Cœur for five-and-twenty years without knowing a good deal about one's neighbours.

"Yes, my dear, there is no doubt this dear Mortemar had once a tenderness for the Michel. He used to breakfast at her shop every morning —a leisurely breakfast, during which those two talked—ah, great Heaven, how they talked! one could hardly get properly served while he was there. And he danced with her in the winter at the Bullier balls, and he used to take her to the theatre. Friends of mine saw them there, as happy as turtle-doves. But what of that? A man must sow his wild oats; and Gaston is not the less fond of your sister because he has played fast and loose with the Michel."

"My sister shall not marry a man who has played fast and loose with any woman," said Rose.

"This is rank nonsense," answered Maman Schubert. "Mark my words, Rose: if you try to part those two, you will break Kathleen's heart."

"Better her heart should be so broken than by a bad husband," said Rose.

"He will not make a bad husband. Do you think a man is any the worse for a flirtation or two in his bachelor days? That is the way he learns the meaning of real love."

Rose was not easily appeased. She saw

Gaston next day, and taxed him with his dishonourable conduct to the widow. He was indignant at the charge, and declared that there had never been anything serious between them. She had been attentive to him as a customer at her *crêmerie;* he had been civil to her—that was all. The visits to the theatre meant no more than civility.

"There was something more than civility on her part, and I think you must have known it," answered Rose, intensely in earnest. "If you knew it and fooled her, you are not a good and true man; and you shall not marry my sister."

Gaston protested against this absurd decree; but finally admitted that he had been to blame. Yes, perhaps he had known that Madame Michel was just a little taken with him, inclined to like his society, and to be jealous and angry when he deserted her shop. The shop was convenient; the woman was handsome and amusing. Why should not a man who was heart-whole, who had not one real woman-friend in the world, talk and laugh with a pretty shopkeeper? It could do no harm.

"It has done harm. I saw as much in Madame Michel's face the other evening." And then she told Gaston the story of that encounter on the quay.

"Mademoiselle Rose, you exaggerate the situation. The Michel has a spice of the devil in her, and can give back looks on very slight provocation. For the rest, she and I have seen the last of each other. I have never crossed the threshold since I was betrothed to Kathleen; I never shall cross it again."

"Promise me that," said Rose.

"I promise, from my heart."

This happened in the year '69; and now it was midsummer in the fateful year '70, and France was treading daily, step by step, nearer the edge of the abyss.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SONG OF VICTORY.

It was at the beginning of August, just after the victory of Sarrebrück, and while Paris was stirred and thrilled with dreams of conquest, and all a-flutter with warlike feeling, that the two sisters were married in the cathedral of Notre Dame, on a sunshiny Saturday morning.

There was no finery at this wedding, no train of friends. Madame Schubert; a young journalist and playwright who wrote for Mortemar's paper; a middle-aged gray-bearded artist, who had painted plaques for some of Durand's cabinet-work — these were the only guests. The little procession walked across the bridge in the morning sunlight, the sisters dressed alike in gray cashmere, with white bonnets, and each wearing a cluster of white roses at her throat. Nothing could be simpler or less costly than this wedding toilet, yet both brides were charming; neatness, purity, modest contentment with humble fortunes, were all expressed in their bearing and costume.

The ceremony was to be at ten. They were a quarter of an hour too soon; and Philip Durand, who loved the grand old pile with the artist's ardent love of fine artistic work, walked in the shadowy aisles with his painter friend, and expatiated upon the beauties of the building, while Rose walked by his side, proud of her lover's learning and enthusiasm.

Kathleen and Gaston waited nearer the altar, the girl kneeling with bent head and hidden face, deep in prayer; the lover sitting near, dreamily watching the graceful figure in soft gray drapery, touched with glintings of coloured light from the old stained windows.

There were no other weddings at that particular hour on that particular morning. These two couples and their friends had the mighty fane all to themselves. As the clock struck ten the organ began to peal, and the priests came slowly towards the altar in their rich vestments—for the vestments worn upon the humblest occasions at Notre Dame are splendid—and the ceremonial began.

All was over in less than half an hour, and Kathleen and her sister went back into the sunshine, out of the gray shadows, the magical lights from painted glass, the glory of gold, and splendour of chromatic colour.

"Is that all?" asked Kathleen, looking up at her lover-husband. "Am I really and truly your wife?"

"Really and truly; and you would have been just as truly my wife if we had never gone further than the mairie."

"No, no, Gaston; for then Heaven would have had no part in our marriage."

"My sweetest, I am content that you should be content. Women love old-world fancies."

There was a stand of carriages in front of the church. Philip Durand hailed two of them, and the wedding-party got in. The two bridegrooms had planned the day between them. They were to breakfast at the restaurant in the Place de la Bourse, chosen for the sake of its winter-garden, which gave an air of prettiness to the sordid fact of dinner. And just now, too, in this time of anxiety and ferment, the Bourse was the central point of Paris, where one could always hear the latest news. Just now Paris lived on tip-toe, as it were, palpitating, thrilling with the expectation of great victories—an Austerlitz, a Jena; the news might be flashed along the wires at any moment of day or night. The telegraph clerks were waiting, fingers itching to record the triumph of Gallic arms. No one thought of Waterloo.

The bridal-party drove across the river, past

the Louvre, into the Rue de Rivoli. What meant this new life and movement in the streets—men running to and fro, women standing in little groups, laughing, crying, hats waved in the air—the wild excitement of a racecourse?

"One would think our happiness had driven all the world out of their wits," said Gaston, with his arm round his wife's slim waist.

There was only Madame Schubert with them in the carriage. She had insisted on taking the back seat, and sat smiling benignly on the happy lovers.

The coachman turned round and shouted to them as he rattled his horse over the broad space in front of the Théâtre Français. The pavement before the cafés was crowded with the usual loungers, smoking, talking, drinking; only the talk and the laughter was louder than usual, the crowd was denser, the air was full of electricity.

"A victory!" shouted the driver, looking round at his fare, and cracking his whip ferociously; "a great victory! MacMahon has made mincemeat of those Prussian dogs!"

"A victory, and on our wedding-day!" exclaimed Kathleen joyously; and then the sweet sensitive face clouded suddenly, and she said, "There can be no victory without soldiers slain. Many hearts of wives and mothers will be mourn-

ing to-day amidst all this joyousness. O Gaston, how thankful I ought to be that you were past the age for service!"

"True, dearest, I am better off here than with the Moblots; but if the National Guard were called out I should have to shoulder my musket."

"But not to leave Paris," said Kathleen, nestling closer to him; "and there can be no fighting in Paris."

"Heaven forbid! No, love; one or two victories, and Prussia will give us whatever terms we ask. What can a herd of Huns and Vandals do against the fine flower of our army, the heroes of Magenta and Solferino, the graybeards of Alma and Algiers?"

They drove along the Rue Vivienne. The narrow street was all in commotion; people at the shop-doors, people at the upper windows; a Babel of voices, a shrill uproar of laughter and exclamation. But in the Place de la Bourse, and on the boulevard beyond, the excitement culminated. It was the fever of Epsom when the Derby has just been won—the stir and tumult of Doncaster at the crowning moment of the Leger; and yet a deeper and stronger fever, for this had the awfulness of life and death.

Victory, yes; but where? Which of the armies was it—MacMahon's or Bazaine's? Or

was it the two armies which had crushed the Prussian forces between them—which had met and joined, like two living walls, deadly, invincible, squeezing out the life of the enemy?

Every one was asking questions, every one answering, stating, counter-stating, asserting, denying; but in this tumult of statement and counter-statement there was a difficulty in arriving at any positive fact, except the one all-inspiring fact that there had been a tremendous victory on the French side. Flags were flying at all the windows —flags produced as if by enchantment; and here came an open carriage slowly through the mob —the carriage of a famous opera-singer. In an instant it was stopped, surrounded by that surging sea of humanity; and the Diva stood up in her carriage at the entreaty—nay, almost the command—of the public, to sing the "Marseillaise."

The glorious finely-trained voice rolled out the soul-stirring words, the notes rising bird-like and clear in the summer air, floating up to the summer sky; and then fifty thousand voices, the deep rough tones of an excited populace, burst forth in the chorus, like human thunder. Impossible to resist the magnetism of that passionate patriotism. The eyes of strong men grew dim, women sobbed hysterically. France, la belle

France — she had been in peril perhaps; yes, strong though she was, there was never war without peril; but she was safe — safe, triumphant, glorious, with her foot upon the enemy's neck. Alas, to think how the Gallic cock crew and flapped his wings during that one wild hour!

The bridal-party pushed their way into the Restaurant Champeaux. Under the glass roof, in the covered flower-garden, there was such a mob that it was very difficult to get a small table in a corner, and a waiter who would cease from hurrying to and fro to take an order from the new-comers. Every one was celebrating the victory with good cheer of some kind. Champagne corks were flying, plates clattering, spoons and forks jingling, and everywhere rose the same din of voices.

Durand and Mortemar contrived, by strenuous exertions, to secure a bottle of champagne and another of bordeaux, a *poulet gras* and a Chateaubriand, some fruit, cheese, salad; and the wedding-party breakfasted merrily amidst the din, squeezed together in their corner, stiflingly hot under the burning glass roof and in the crowded atmosphere. But who would not be happy on a wedding-day, and in the hour of victory? They sat at the little table for more than an hour, nearly half of which time had been wasted in

waiting; and when they went out again it seemed to Durand's keen eye as if a change had come over the spirit of the crowd outside. There were only about half the people, and faces were graver —some faces of business men looking even perplexed and troubled; voices less loud; no more hats thrown into the air, no more laughter.

The rest of the bridal-party were too much absorbed in each other to note this change in the public temper. The carriages were waiting to take them to the Buttes Chaumont, where it had been decided to spend the afternoon. They were to go back to a dinner, which Madame Schubert and Rose had planned between them, in Madame Schubert's apartment, which was spacious and splendid in the eyes of the dwellers in Gît le Cœur. Durand and Mortemar had wished to give a dinner at some popular restaurant—au Moulin Rouge, for instance; but the women had set their faces against such extravagance. Rose argued that it was a sin to squander money on eating and drinking. She had heard that at such places a napoleon was charged for a single dish, a franc for a pear or a peach; yes, when peaches were to be had for three or four sous at the street-corners. So Maman Schubert and Rose had held grave consultations, and had gone marketing together on the eve of the wedding; and now, while

they were driving merrily towards the Place de la Bastille, the *daube à la Provençale* was simmering slowly on the little charcoal stove in la Schubert's tiny kitchen. The *petits fours* from the confectioner's in the Rue du Bac were ready in the doll's-house larder, and the dinner-table was set out with its fruit and flowers and golden-crusted loaves of finest bread, and bottles of innocent Médoc, ready for the feast.

The excitement of the good news pervaded Paris. The Rue St. Antoine, the Place de la Bastille, were alive with idlers. They drove by the long dreary Rue de la Roquette, past the prison-walls, away to Ménilmontant and Belleville, where the honest harmless working population, the blue blouses and white muslin caps, were all astir in the sunshine—a seething crowd. There was a kind of fair on the Boulevard, a Saturday and Sunday fair—swings and roundabouts, and a juggler or two—all merry in the white August dust, under the hot blue sky.

They drove through narrow old streets on the top of the hill—dusty, crowded, unwholesome, wretched dwellings; a truculent rabble, blue blouses, white night caps, everywhere; queer little wine-shops, queer little eating-houses, an intolerable odour of *petit bleu* and *absinthe suisse*, a tumult of harsh voices—and so to the wonderful gardens,

the green valleys and Alpine crags, the blue lakes and Swiss summer-houses, and Grecian temples of the old, old quarries that have been made into a pleasure-ground for the people of Paris; surely the prettiest, gayest, most picturesque playground that ever a tyrant gave to his slaves. Let us call him a tyrant, now that he is asleep in his English grave, and all the good he did for the Paris he loved so well is appropriated by new masters, his name obliterated from all things which his brain devised and his enterprise created.

The wedding-party drove in by the gate that had admitted so many brides and bridegrooms, smart and smiling, in their new clothes, their new bliss. They drove a little way into the grounds, and then alighted, and climbed one of the Alpine promontories, and looked down upon the gay scene beneath. Never was a more joyous crowd beneath a brighter sky, amidst a fairer landscape. It seemed as if all Paris was taking holiday. The verdant valley was a palpitating mass of blue blouses, white caps, particoloured raiment, brightened here and there by the uniform of a *sergent de ville.* One could hardly see the greensward, so dense was this muster of human beings. The châlets were crowded with customers; lemonade, syrups, coffee, ices, Bavarian beer, were being consumed wholesale. Mothers and children, fathers,

sweethearts: Paris was all here *en famille*, all elated at the great news, somewhat vague at present. But Gaston and his young wife went higher and higher, seeking some solitary spot beyond this holiday throng, and at last found a hill upon which vegetation was wilder and more romantic, and where they were alone for a little while, looking down upon Paris lying in an oval basin at their feet, a city of white houses and church towers, domes and statues, girdled with gardens, flashing with fountains, the beautiful river winding through the white streets and quays like a broad blue ribbon, touched with gleams of gold.

"Is it not a noble city?" asked Gaston, proud of his birthplace, the only home he had ever known.

Yonder to their left, on the slope of the hill, lay the cemetery, crosses and columns, Egyptian sepulchres, Roman temples, glittering whitely in the sun, amidst a tangle of summer foliage.

"Shall we be there, among the limes, when our life is over, I wonder?" mused Kathleen. "Perhaps you will have a tomb like Balzac's or Musset's. Who knows?"

"Who knows, indeed, dearest? I have been earning my bread by my pen for the last ten years, and do not find myself any nearer the

fame of a Balzac than when I began. Yet who knows what I may do now I have you to work for? Balzac had a long time to wait. Fame comes in an hour sometimes. And of late, inspired by thoughts of you, I have nursed the dim idea of a novel, as I tramped backwards and forwards to the office. Yes, I believe I have a fancy which, worked out faithfully, might hit the Parisians. But a journalist is the drudge of literature. All his faculties are the slaves of a tyrannical master, whose name is To-day. He must think only of the present, write only for the present. He must harbour neither memories of the past nor dreams of the future. If Shakespeare and Goethe had written for the papers we should have neither *Faust* nor *Hamlet*."

"But you will not always have to work for the papers?"

"Who can tell? I must be at work early to-morrow to write a description of that scene on the Bourse for the Monday number."

"If I could only help you!" sighed Kathleen.

"You do help me, dearest. You have helped me to nobler ambitions, to purer hopes. You have made me work with higher purpose, with steadier aim. You are the good spirit of my life."

"Tell me about your story," she said, "the story you have in your mind."

"It is all about love—and you. I will tell you nothing. But some day I shall contrive to write it, between whiles, between paragraph and paragraph, leader and leader, and I shall get a publisher to produce it, under a *nom de plume*, and the book shall be the talk of Paris; and you shall read it with smiles and tears, and you shall say, 'O Gaston, what a painter, what a poet, what an inspired dreamer this man must be! I only wish I knew who he is, that I might worship him.' And I shall say, 'Worship me, love. I am the poet and the dreamer; and you are my only Egeria.'"

He looked like a poet, as he lay at her feet on the sun-burnt sward, his eyes gazing dreamily over the city in the valley—dreamily away towards Mount Valerian and the fortifications on the other side of Paris.

They loitered away the long summer afternoon in serenest contentment, in deep inexpressible bliss. It seemed to them as if life were henceforward perfect. They had nothing left to desire—except, perhaps, on Gaston's side, fame and wealth, in a remote dream-like future. Kathleen had no desire to be rich. Poverty had never hurt her; except in that one sad time, when her

sister was ill. And now she had a little money, put away in a secret place, against any such evil hour. Poverty had no flavour of bitterness for this easily satisfied nature. She rose as gaily as a lark; she went about her little duties singing for very joyousness. Her humble fare was sweetened by her contented spirit. Her humble home was beautified by all those little arts which endear lowly rooms to the dweller. And now, to begin life anew, on the same third floor, in the Rue Gît le Cœur, with her lover-husband, was like the crowning bliss on the last page of a fairy tale.

The streets were very quiet, and had a somewhat gloomy look as the wedding-party drove back to Gît le Cœur; but they were all too happy, too much engrossed by their own bliss, to remark the change that had come over the aspect of the city. No more flags, no more cheering, no more songs of triumph.

"I wonder they did not illuminate some of the public buildings," said Durand, as they passed the Palais de Justice.

Not a festival lamp twinkled in the August sundown; not a star of coloured light sparkled on all the length of the quays; not a rocket shot up above the chestnuts in the Gardens of the Tuileries. Paris wore her every-day aspect. How-

ever elated the city had been this morning, she was taking her triumph soberly to-night.

The little dinner in the Rue Gît le Cœur was a great success. The feast was held in Madame Schubert's apartment, and that kindly matron presided at the banquet. Never was there a merrier meal; voices all mingling now and then in a joyous tumult of speech—voices low and sweet, deep and resonant—and ripples of happy laughter; a frequent clinking of glasses, and anecdotes and *calembourgs*. Gaston's friend the journalist turned out a wit of the first water; and the gray-bearded grave artist proved wonderfully good company; he was loaded with anecdotes, like a six-chambered revolver, and before his audience had done laughing at one story he had begun another, still funnier, and then another, funnier again, a perpetual crescendo of mirth.

Just as a crowning feature, with the dessert, came a single bottle of champagne, whose cork exploded with the force of a cannon.

"Listen there!" cried the journalist. "How that thunders! It is the true wine of war."

And at this a burst of gaiety. It is such a droll thing, *la guerre*, when one's own country is winning.

"Just one little glass more, *une polichinelle*,

my friend," said Gaston, filling his fellow-scribbler's glass, "to fête our arms."

After the champagne, Gaston slipped out quietly, with just a whispered explanation to his wife. He had to go round to the newspaper office, in the Rue St. André des Arts, to arrange about his descriptive article for Sunday, or, in point of fact, to write his paper on the spot.

He was gone about an hour and a half, and although the anecdotes and *calembourgs* went on, and the fun was fast and furious all the time, that hour and a half seemed passing long to his bride.

When he came back the gloom of his countenance scared the revellers.

"Why, Gaston, thou lookest as dolorous as the statue of the Commandante! What ails thee, Trouble-feast?"

"It was all a hoax," cried Mortemar, flinging down his hat savagely, "a trick of that black-hearted devil Bismarck. There has been no French victory—defeat, if anything. And our shouts, our songs, our flags—all madness and folly."

"O, but come, now, that is a little too strong on the part of *ce coquin* Bismarck."

"Yes, it is too strong. He is strong and we are weak—weaker than water. A nation that

has no prudence, no caution, no coolness of brain, can never be a great nation. We are children, always ready to take a will-o'-the-wisp for a comet."

"We are Celts, my friend, that is all. And we have the strength and the weakness of the Celtic nature," quietly answered the gray-bearded painter. "I am afraid these slow square-headed Saxons will get the better of us. It is the old race of the hare and the tortoise over again."

CHAPTER V.

THE COMING OF THE SQUARE-HEADS.

No, there had been no victory. That outburst of patriotic fervour had wasted itself upon an idle dream. Paris awoke in a very savage humour on Sunday morning: and then came laughter and cynical jests. Everybody accused his neighbour of having eagerly swallowed the lie. Everybody declared that he, for his own part, had never believed the news so greedily accepted by the mob.

But in those two new homes in the Rue Gît le Cœur there was bliss, whether the arms of France were victorious or otherwise far away in those unknown lands, which the Parisians were picking out with pins upon gaily-coloured maps, sticking up tiny flags here and there on the map to show where the French troops were, the very spot where great battles might be expected momently, great victories—a new Auerstadt, a second Jena.

What do little birds in their nests on St.

Valentine's Day care what battles the big eagles, the hawks, and the vultures are fighting far away among Scottish mountains, on Alpine summits? The birds have their nests, and each to each is the world in little.

"Let the world slide, we shall never be younger," said Gaston, who knew Shakespeare, in the translation of Charles Hugo.

He and his young wife were utterly happy. If there were dark clouds impending they could not see them. Is not love blind—blind to all things except the beloved? The faintest shadow on Gaston's brow troubled Kathleen, but not those signs of tempest which were gathering round France.

The new home was full of smiles. Kathleen and Gaston had smartened the old furniture by some modest additions bought before their marriage—a writing-table, a cabinet, a bookcase filled with Gaston's books, the accumulation of the last ten years, a few old mezzo-tints picked up from time to time at the print-shops on the quay. Kathleen and Rose had toiled for months to make both homes complete and pretty. Curtains and chair-covers were all the work of those two pairs of industrious hands.

Durand, who was richer than Mortemar, had taken the lower floor for his own *ménage*. In the

Rue Gît le Cœur that second floor ranked as a rather important suite of rooms.

The apartment consisted of *salon*, fifteen feet by twelve, with two casement windows commanding the shabby little courtyard; a bedroom somewhat smaller; a little room which would serve as a workshop for Durand, who did a good deal of artistic cabinet-work on his own account after business hours; and a tiny kitchen. Durand's skilful hands had made all the best of the furniture in the dead watches of the night, when other men were sleeping or dissipating; so the home of Rose and Philip was furnished in a style worthy of a man who stood high in the syndicate of cabinet-makers.

But while life was so full of happiness for the newly-married, the sky was darkening outside. An army of undeniable valour, but in number terribly inferior to the foe, and led by generals of scandalous incapacity, was brought face to face with the whole of Germany, in arms as one man, burning to avenge the agony and shame of sixty years ago. On the 4th of August came the defeat of General Douay, beaten and slain at Wissembourg; and on the 6th the still more deplorable reverses of MacMahon at Wœrth, at Fröschweiler, and at Reichshofen. By the breach thus opened the enemy poured into France like a torrent.

They came, the *têtes carrées!* There was no longer room for self-deception. This was invasion.

And now far off, dimly as in a dream, Paris beheld the pale spectre of siege and famine. The Parisians knew hardly anything of the truth, which came to them only in garbled fragments. They knew not that upon the heels of these three or four hundred thousand men let loose upon France would follow hundreds of thousands more; yes, nearly all the male population of the old German Empire.

Dark rumours of evil without the walls only drew those two households nearer to each other, made home joys sweeter, love closer. But now Kathleen learnt the meaning of fear. She was full of morbid terrors when her husband was away from her. She pictured an advance guard of Prussians falling upon him in the street; a shell from the enemy's artillery bursting at his feet. And Gaston went every day to the office of the *Drapeau Rouge*. He had leaders to write, *tartines*, letters, patriotic articles breathing warlike fire, every full stop seeming like a shell. France beaten, France invaded? Ah, but there was nothing in this world so unlikely, so near the impossible; and yet, while he wrote, French arms were being flung down, French soldiers were fly-

ing—a wild rabble—from before the face of the foe; and the invader's foot was on the soil, tramping onwards, steadily, steadily, steadily, gigantic, invincible, like some mighty force of Nature, slow, cumulative, pitiless. But say that the soldiers of France had fled; say that Achilles himself had flung down his sword and shield, and taken to his heels; whose was the fault? Why, naturally, it was the government that was to blame, shrieked the *Red Flag*. Down with the Ministers! Let us have new Ministers, and our arms will be victorious. MacMahon and Bazaine will unite their forces, and the tide of victory will roll backward across those advancing herds of Huns and Pandours, and sweep the savages back to their native pine-woods, their desert wastes beside the Danube.

There was a sudden shuffle of cards in the political game. Gramont and Ollivier retired, driven out by a vote of censure, and General Montauban, Comte de Palikao, took the helm.

"A military Mercadet with a touch of Robert Macaire," said the *Red Flag*. "What good could be expected from such *canaille*?"

The month of August wore on—a month of anxiety, of wavering hopes, of strengthening fears. History records no bloodier battles than Rezonville and Gravelotte, fought in the middle of that

anxious month; and although Bazaine claimed the first as a victory, he was still steadily retreating; every day brought him nearer Metz, where he finally retired, abandoning his communications with MacMahon and the rest of France.

Then came the rumour that Metz was blockaded: Bazaine and his hundred and eighty thousand men were bound round with bonds of iron, useless, helpless. MacMahon was encamped at Châlons, recreating his army, and thither regiment after regiment of undisciplined youth was sent to him; and undisciplined youth made the country round ring with the noise of its follies, made France blush for her sons. And still the flood of invasion rolled on, steadily as the rising tide; a week, a fortnight at most, and the Crown Prince with his victorious army would debouch upon the plain of Gênevilliers. And now in earnest this time, seeing the enemy so near, Paris awakened to the possibility of a siege; but even yet fear was not so serious as to stimulate the city to prompt and earnest action. The people waited—expectant, hopeful still: something would happen, something unforeseen—a miracle perhaps.

Something unforeseen did happen; but the unforeseen wore the shape of shame, defeat, humiliation—an empire overthrown in one bloody

day; Emperor a state prisoner, Empress a fugitive, army prisoners of war.

First came the tidings that MacMahon, instead of trying to block the passage of the Germans, instead of falling back upon the capital to fight one of the world's decisive battles under the walls of Paris, was moving northwards, obviously intent upon joining and releasing Bazaine.

What might not be hoped from a coalition between two such generals—one who had risen with every defeat, the other as famous for indomitable energy as for military skill? What might not be hoped for from Bazaine's hundred and eighty thousand men, the flower of the French army?

For two days, the first balmy days of September, a restless, feverish, overexcited populace lived upon the boulevards and in the streets; questions, statements, counter-statements flew from lip to lip, while false reports and monstrous exaggerations were in the very air men breathed. Then, on a Saturday night, came the news of a great calamity; a terrible battle had been fought, was still being fought, with fluctuating fortunes, in the environs of Sedan. But the ultimate result? For this Paris waited with inexpressible agitation. The newsvendors' kiosques were besieged by tumultuous crowds; hands

were stretched forth tremulous with excitement, clutching at the papers; men stood upon the boulevard benches, reading the news aloud, above a sea of heads.

Nothing was certain in the news thus devoured, nothing precise. The crowd, deprived of official information, was consumed by a nervous irritability, a fever of hopes and fears. Men were impatient, captious, quarrelsome. At the first word of doubt they were ready to treat each other as Prussians or traitors; for a mere nothing they would have challenged each other to mortal combat. Voices were sharp, strangers glared at one another with angry eyes.

Lamps began to shimmer in the summer twilight, cafés and wine-shops shone out upon the night, and gradually, imperceptibly, the knowledge of a great catastrophe spread and circulated on every side. Details were wanting; but France had suffered some terrible defeat. *That* was seen in every face. No one in Paris slept that night. The Corps Législatif called a midnight sitting; and the Empire sank through the stage of this world to the realm of chaos and night, evanescent as a scene in a fairy play; and the curtain rose upon the Republic.

The next day was Sunday, September the 4th, and the newborn Republic began in the glory of

a cloudless summer sky. O strange people, children of smiles and tears! Last night Paris had been plunged to the bottom of a black abyss, steeped in the horror of calamity, brought face to face with the certainty of an imminent siege, her army annihilated, her Empire fallen. Paris had laid herself down in dust and ashes, with weeping and wailing for the splendour that had perished, the glory that was gone.

To-day, Sunday, and a holiday, Paris awoke radiant. Again the excited populace filled the boulevards, poured along the streets, a strong current of humanity trending towards the Champs Elysées and the Bois. But to-day the note is changed. It is no longer the harsh minor of Rachel's wail for her lost sons, but the glad psalm of Deborah. The Empire has fallen, has fallen. Long live the Republic! Let them come, the *têtes carrées!* We are more than a match for them *now.* Joy beams on every face. The crowd wears its holiday clothes, its holiday aspect.

Every now and then a battalion of the National Guard tramps singing along the roadway. They stop their song to cry, "Long live the Republic!" and thunderous acclamations reply, "Long live the Republic!"

And now came a time of preparation, expectation, anticipation. The days of uncertainty were

over, and William and his conquering hosts were pouring steadily on towards this beautiful city of Paris. Bismarck had avowed that he bore no grudge against France: he made war only upon the Empire. And lo, the Empire was ended like a morning dream, the eagles were draggled in the blood-stained dust of disastrous battlefields: and still Germany pressed onward, laughing with a sardonic laughter at the impediments that France set in her way. Here a bridge blown to the four winds, there a viaduct shattered, railway-lines cut, destruction everywhere; and yet the barbarous hordes tramped on over the ruins that strewed the way, pouring, pouring, pouring onward, like the army of locusts in Holy Writ.

The Parisians expected an assault, a great battle, victory or speedy doom. They waited boldly, strong in their faith that Bellona was on their side. The goddess of battle had hidden her face from them hitherto, but it must be that she loved her France, laurel-crowned Victrix of so many glorious fields, mother of heroes.

Yet, although expectant of short and sharp strife, Paris prudently prepared against the hazard of a blockade. She gathered in her flocks and herds, she heaped up corn and coal. The Grand Opéra, that palatial pile which was to have been a crowning glory of the Empire, was converted

into a storehouse, half reservoir, half granary. She set to work to complete her unfinished fortifications, but passing slowly. She armed all her citizens. Chassepots and Remingtons were your only wear. And honest shopkeepers, who had never pulled a trigger, swaggered and strutted in warlike gear. Every head wore the képi; every man told himself that come what might, let trade or family perish, he must be *there*, on the walls, ready to receive William and his Pandours. With some there was an idea that those advancing hordes were fresh from their native pine-forests, half-naked savages, with long hair and wolf-skins slung across their brawny shoulders—such men as destroyed Varus and his legions—such men as fought and died for Vercingetorix.

"Let them come," said the sleek grocers and bakers of Paris. "We are getting ready for them."

She cut down her wood, her beautiful Bois de Boulogne, the happy holiday ground of high and low. Those leafy arcades were given over to the woodman's axe, those trees were mutilated or hewn down. The swans upon the silvery lake, the fauna of those shadowy groves, were abandoned to the guns of the Moblots. Everywhere the creak and crash of falling timber, the scream of dying beast or bird. There, where the gay

procession of carriages used to circulate in the afternoon sunlight, were now loneliness and ruin; here and there a few scattered plumes, white on the greensward, showed where death had been; here and there the thick black smoke, and fitful flame, marked a newly fired thicket.

Paris was a camp, and every citizen a soldier. But the soldier's duty was neither onerous nor varied at this period. There was the morning rendezvous from seven to eight, the day and night watch on the ramparts, short slumbers under canvas, for the casemates which were to shelter these heroes later on were not yet built.

Among these soldiers of the National Guard Philip Durand and Gaston Mortemar were both numbered. The charmed life of the newly wedded was over. The domestic hearth was lonely. The husband could only return to his home in the intervals of his service as a defender of his city. And the wife was full of fear in her lonely home, or prowling in the neighbouring streets on some small household errand, loitering with other wives on doorsteps or at street corners, devouring the last news from the ramparts.

Trade was at a standstill. Each National Guard had his allowance of a franc and a half a day, with a small sum for wife or family; but it was almost impossible for him to carry on any

handicraft during this reign of chassepot and Remington. Some there were—the few, the elect among workers—who contrived to accomplish something in their brief respite from soldiering; and among these was Durand. His employer had shut up his factory. What good was there in creating articles of luxury—artistic cabinets *à la Renaissance*, writing-tables *à la* Dubarry, commodes *à la* Maintenon, what use in imitating the finest works of Buhl and Reisnier, when the city was girt with iron, and might ere long be girt with fire? when at any evil hour, as yet unmarked upon the calendar, a bomb might explode in the middle of the factory, and send Buhl and Reisnier, delicate inlaid-work, ormolu and cherry-wood, pear-tree and ebony, in a shower of splinters through the shattered roof? The proprietor stowed away his choicest woods in his cellars, and locked up his warehouses and workshops. No goods could be exported from a blockaded city; and in the city there were no purchasers of art furniture.

But this did not constrain Durand to lay aside his gouges and chisels. Before his marriage he had brought home to his little workshop some fine pieces of old wood collected in various nooks and corners of Paris—an oak panel from the wreckage of a church, an old walnut sideboard,

thick, heavy, clumsy, but O, so well seasoned and richly coloured, from a sixteenth century house in the Marais—and with treasures such as these to his hand Philip Durand had no lack of work. He had undertaken a *magnum opus* in the shape of a sideboard, which in design and workmanship was to surpass anything that had yet been done in the factory where he was chief workman. All his knowledge of the master pieces in carved oak, all his taste and skill were brought to bear upon this piece of furniture. His long Sunday afternoons in the Louvre, his study of the art-books in the Imperial Library, all helped him in his handicraft. Jacques Mollin, his friend the painter, was at his elbow to make suggestions while the drawings for the sideboard were in progress. The mighty dead had their part in the work. This tangle of fruit and flowers on the cornice owed something to Van Huysum. This heap of wild fowl and hares, flung as it were hap-hazard against a lower panel, was a *souvenir* of Snyders. Everywhere the mind of the artist informed the hand of the craftsman. And the sideboard was as the apple of Philip Durand's eye. It was sure to bring him money, which he cared for only for the sake of his wife and his home; it might bring him fame, which he valued for his own sake, and still more for Rose, who would be proud by and

by to say, "I did not marry a common workman."

She was a gentleman's daughter, the daughter of an officer in the English army, a man of good birth and refined surroundings. This man of the people never ignored that fact when he thought of his wife. He wanted to atone to her for the sacrifice she had made; he never thought of her as the grisette, earning her living by the labour of her hands; but as Captain O'Hara's daughter, born and bred as a lady, stooping from her high estate to become a mechanic's wife.

How happy were those brief glimpses of home, those brief hours with gouge and chisel, beside the hearth, while Rose stood by and watched the slow careful work—the chiselling of a feather, the rounding of a peach, the minute touches that marked the scales of a fish!

Yes, even while fear and uncertainty ruled without, while earnings were nil, and the strictest economy was needed lest these days of scarcity should exhaust the little capital amassed with such miracles of prudence and self-denial; even now, with the enemy within sight of the walls, with the future of France wrapped in gloom, there was gladness in this humble home on the second floor in the Rue Gît le Cœur, and the little dinner or supper of bread and salad, the

morsel of Lyons sausage, or the wine-soup was as a feast at this board, where Love ever sat as the chief guest, smiling, blind to misfortune, careless of days to come.

Above-stairs, in the journalist's home, Love also reigned, and here, too, was the deep happiness of perfect union: but with Gaston and Kathleen life was less calm than in the Durand household. Gaston was steeped to the lips in the fever of politics, was blown hither and thither, his soul tossed and agitated by every breath of the public whirlwind. He had friends here, there, and everywhere among the extreme Republican party; he believed in Rochefort, he worshipped Flourens, that hot headed enthusiast who just at this time was in command of five battalions of the National Guard, the beloved of Belleville and Ménilmontant, a leader at whose beat of drum that seething populace were ready to rise as one man.

The *Red Flag* was loud in its reproaches against existing authorities. The *Red Flag* lauded Blanqui and the Blanquists, and was just now at the height of popularity, rivalling Félix Pyat's paper, *Le Combat*, and Blanqui's *Patrie en Danger;* and yet the day was to come when the *Patrie en Danger* would cease to charm, and the *Red Flag* would not be half red enough—would perish as an effete rag, too tame, too soft for the age of

anarchy and death. The day was to come when every colour would be too pale for Paris, save the deep dark hue of blood.

But at this time Paris had not yet begun to suppress its newspapers. The *Red Flag* was popular, and Gaston Mortemar was the most popular among its contributors. He was paid liberally for his work; for in this day of doubt and uncertainty the poorest could spare a couple of sous for a paper that told how France was being misgoverned, and called upon the supreme sovereign people—the Mirabeaus and Robespierres, and Dantons and Marats of Ménilmontant, to arise in their might, and steer the tempest-driven ship to a safe harbour—the smooth roadstead of Communism, Collectivism, Karl Marxism, what you will; every man his own master, no hereditary nobility, no landowners, no millionaires, a universal level of blue blouses and cheap wines.

And as weeks and months wore on, and autumn began to have a wintry aspect, and party rose against party, faction against faction, and agitation and fever were in the very air men breathed, Kathleen's breast was fluttered by many fears. In Gaston's absence she was never free from nervous apprehensions, from morbid imaginings. It was only in those brief intervals when

he was at home, sitting at his desk, writing passionate vehement protests against this or that, prophecies of evil, wild suggestions for wilder action, bending over his paper with pale nervous face and flashing eyes, dipping his pen into the ink as if it were a stiletto stuck in the heart of the foe, writing as if Satan himself guided his pen, or snatching some hurried meal while the printer's devil ran off with the copy, to return an hour after with the proof—it was only then, when he was *there*, and she could stand beside him as he wrote, and twine her arms round his neck, or smooth his disordered hair, stooping now and then to kiss the troubled brow, that Kathleen felt her husband was safe. At all other times she thought of him as a mark for Prussian bullets or for private vengeance. She had visions of every kind of catastrophe that might befall him.

"Oh, how I pity the poor rich wives, the great ladies of Paris!" she said to Gaston one day as she sat on his knee, after their scanty meal, brushing back the rumpled hair from his forehead with two loving hands, looking down into the dark eyes which gave back her look of love; "how I pity them, poor things, sent away to Dieppe or to Etretat, to Arcachon or Trouville, parted from their husbands, languishing yonder in fear and trembling! Don't you think it was

cruel of the husbands to send them away, Gaston?"

"No, dearest; unselfish rather than cruel. The women and children have been sent away from scarcity and danger, from trouble and fear. I wish you had let me send you to your old friends at the convent near Bruges, whose charity would have forgiven your flight, and who might have sheltered you in peace and security till this tempest should be overpast."

"Peace and security away from you? I should have broken my heart in a week. You could never have been cruel enough to send me away!"

"Do you suppose I would not rather have you here, pet?" he asked, looking up at her, drawing down the pale fair face to meet his own, and covering it with kisses; "the light of my home, the guardian angel of my life. The brief half-hours that we can spend together thus and thus and thus," with a kiss after each word, "are better than a year of commonplace comfort; our meal of bread and haricots is better than a dinner at Bignon's in the golden days of the Empire that is dead, when dining ranked among the fine arts. Did you read my last article in the *Drapeau*, Kathleen?" he asked in conclusion, with a little look which betrayed the vanity of the successful

journalist—the man who believes that he moulds and makes public opinion.

"Did I read it?" cried Kathleen; "why, I read every word you write! There is no one so eloquent, no one else whose prose is so full of poetry—except, perhaps, Victor Hugo—but I like your style better than his," she added quickly, lest he should be offended; "only, Gaston, sometimes as I read I fear that you are not wise, that those grand glowing words of yours—words that burn like vitriol sometimes—may fire a train which will lead to an explosion, an explosion in which we all may perish. Think of all those people at Belleville and Ménilmontant, and Montmartre and Clignancourt—many and many of them honest industrious souls, desiring only right and justice, but others steeped in crime, misery, hatred—a seething mass, fermenting in the corruption of idleness and sin—ready to arise like a poison cloud, and spread death and ruin over the city. Do you remember last Sunday, when we went for a long walk in those streets beyond the Boulevard Richard Lenoir? There were faces in the crowd, Gaston, that made me shudder, that made me cold with horror; faces of women as well as of men—yes, I think the women were worst—faces which haunted me afterwards."

"There are blouses and blouses, Kathleen," said

Gaston, smiling at her earnestness. "You cannot expect that men and women who have toiled and grovelled for two-thirds of a lifetime in semi-starvation—who have seen all the splendours, and pleasures, and comforts of this world pass by, afar in the distance, no more to them than pictures in a magic-lantern—you can hardly expect that kind of clay to dress itself up in smiles on a Sunday afternoon, and to sing hymns of thankfulness to the Creator."

"I should not have been surprised that they looked discontented," said Kathleen, "but they all looked so wicked."

"Discontent and wickedness are very near akin," answered her husband. "When there is work for all, and food for all, you will see very few of those wicked faces. I am one of the Apostles of the Religion of Collectivism, and when that is the creed of France there shall be no more starvation, no more discontent, no great masses of wealth locked up in foreign loans or distant railways; no millionaires' palaces, with a million or so sunk in pictures and *bric-à-brac;* but the money won by the labourer, and there shall be no such thing as stagnant capital. We have seen enough of Dives, in his purple and fine linen, Kathleen; it is time that Lazarus should

have his turn. Dives means the individual: Lazarus means the nation."

"But if, when the Prussians have gone, you are going to do away with millionaires, who is to buy Philip's sideboard?" demanded Kathleen, perceiving that this paradise of Collectivism was not without its inconveniences.

"No one," answered Gaston lightly. "Philip is a fool to create such a white elephant. The age of personal luxury, pomp, and show, and wild expenditure was an outcome of the Empire; it meant rottenness and corruption, bribery, falsehood, debauchery, an age of courtiers and cocodettes, stock-jobbers and card-sharpers. In the age that is coming there will be no carved oak sideboards worth twenty thousand francs, no Gobelins tapestries, no Sèvres porcelain. There will be a bit of beef in every man's *pot-au-feu*, a roof over every man's head, food and shelter, light and air, and cleanliness and comfort, and a free education for all."

"And it is towards *this* all your articles in the *Drapeau* tend?" asked Kathleen naïvely.

"To this, and to this only."

"I am so glad. I was afraid sometimes that you were urging the people to act as they acted in '93, when King and Queen, patriots and priests,

and helpless innocent people weltered in their blood, yonder, on the Place de la Concorde."

"My dearest, I preach Communism, not Revolution," answered Gaston, in all good faith. "We have no princes to slay. We have got rid of Badinguet and all that *canaille;* we have a clear stage and no favour; and it will be our own fault if France does not rise regenerated, purified, chastened by her misfortune, a veritable Phœnix, from the ashes of ruined towns and villages, from the dry bones of a slaughtered army."

"And there will be nobody to buy poor Philip's sideboard," concluded Kathleen sorrowfully, full of regret for the enthusiast in the little workshop below stairs.

It seemed to Kathleen as if a world, in which there were no rich people to buy works of art, no beautiful women clad in satin and velvet, no splendid carriages drawn by thoroughbred horses, no palace windows shining across the dusk with the yellow light of myriad wax-candles, no gardens seen by fitful glimpses athwart shrubbery and iron railing, would be rather a dreary world to live in, albeit there was bread for all, and a kind of holy poverty, as of some severe monastic order, reigning everywhere.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE RAMPARTS.

PARIS was a camp; but so far it was but playing at soldiers, after all, for those within the walls; though there was plenty of hard fighting outside; and many a wounded Moblot was carried to the ambulance on a litter, never to leave it alive; and many a mother's heart was tortured with fear for her sons; and many a Rachel wept for those that were not. But though the roar of cannon thundered, or grumbled sullen and dully in the distance, the National Guard within the walls had, what their American friends called, a good time. The watch upon the ramparts was the most onerous duty, and it was only the night-watch—the cold shelter of a tent, where the sentinel, returning from duty, generally found an intruder snoring upon his own particular knapsack, and under his own particular rug—which the honest citizen soldier found in somewise hardship. For Gaston Mortemar, young, vigorous, full of enthusiasm, ready, like Flourens, to lead five

battalions to the fray, if need were, the cold nights of October and the canvas quarters were as nothing. His mind was charged with enthusiasm as with electricity. That bitter defeat, that day of humiliation yonder, on the Belgian frontier, seemed to him the justice of the gods, the salvation of France. The Man of December and Sedan —it was thus Blanquists and Internationals spoke of the late Emperor—was dethroned. That Empire of *clinquant* and *flouerie* had crumbled into dust, *l'Infâme fut écrasé*, and France was free to achieve her glorious Destiny, as the liberator of the world, and to establish the millennium of Communism, the peaceful reign of blouses, blue and white, the apotheosis of Belleville and Ménilmontant.

In many a fervid speech Gaston depicted the glories of that coming age, yonder at the club of the Folies Bergères, at two steps from the Boulevard Montmartre, where the talk ranged ever from grave to gay, from the passionate oratory of the fanatic to the lowest deep of *blague* and buffoonery. There, and in the Salle Favre, and in many other such places, Gaston preached his gospel of free labour, every man his own master, every workman his own capitalist, no concentration of profits, no man permitted to grow rich by the sweat of another man's brow.

"The civilised world has outlived black slavery," he cried; "but so long as we still have white slavery—the slavery of the journeyman under the heel of the capitalist—there is no meaning in the word civilisation; there is no such thing on earth as justice."

He paced the ramparts, chassepot in hand, full of such thoughts, ready to repulse the Prussians, who had not the least idea of attacking bastion or curtain while the gradual work of exhaustion was going on within the charmed circle; and it was only a question of so many months, so many weeks, so many days, when starving Paris must surrender. Already there had been talk of an armistice, and already that heroic cry of Jules Favre, hurled like a gauntlet in the teeth of the enemy, "Not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses," sounded bitterest mockery.

Gaston's belief in the power of France against Germany was growing feebler every day; but his faith in the great French people, as represented by the blouses of Paris, and in the Commune, as the perfection of government, grew day by day. Were not the people showing every hour of what noble stuff they were made? See how steadily they faced the terrors of a beleaguered city, the deprivations of a state of siege. Behold their

courage, their patience, their gay good temper. Drunk occasionally, perhaps; but what of that? Quarrelsome now and again, but in mere exuberance of an enthusiastic temperament. See how little the knife had been used in these occasional brawls—a *coup de savate*, a nose tweaked here and there, sufficed. The people showed themselves a nation of heroes.

It did not occur to Gaston Mortemar that Belleville and Ménilmontant, Clignancourt and Montmartre, were getting a good time; that it was as if Bermondsey and Bethnal Green, Whitechapel and Clerkenwell, were having a universal holiday, while every man got fifteen-pence a day, and an allowance for his family, for doing nothing. At every street-corner there was a cluster of the National Guard, drinking, laughing, orating, playing the game of *bouchon*, an innocent little game of chance with the corks of their wine-bottles; everywhere, even on the boulevards, dim with the half-light of alternate lamps, there were sounds of laughter and gaiety; while day by day came tidings of some skirmish outside the walls, which had ended disastrously for those poor Moblots, who had a knack of running away helter-skelter when they found themselves the focus of a circle of artillery.

It was early in October, and as yet there was

no actual scarcity of food. Hardship and famine, the bitter cold of winter, were yet in the future. Luxuries were things to be remembered in the dreams of the epicure or the sensualist; but frugal Spartan fare was within reach of all who had a little money in the stocking, who had kept their *poire pour la soif*. The little children were not yet pining, sickening, fading off the earth for lack of a cup of milk, and the *crêmerie* in the street round the corner was in full swing.

Suzon Michel's *crêmerie* was something more than a *crêmerie* in these days. It was almost a club. Communists, Internationalists, Collectivists, had their rendezvous in the little shop where Gaston Mortemar used to eat his breakfast in days gone by. The more temperate and respectable of the revolutionary party loved to assemble here. The fare was frugal, but there was a debauch of oratory: and, in the midst of all the talk, the gesticulations, the prophecies, the threatenings and denunciations, Suzon was as the Goddess of Liberty, the Muse of Revolution, the Egeria of the gutter. She had read of Théroigne de Méricourt, of Madame Roland, and she fancied herself something between the two. She talked as boldly, as loudly as the loudest of her customers. She felt that she could mount the scaffold, and lay her neck under the fatal knife without flinching.

Never had she looked handsomer than in these days of fever and commotion. Sometimes she twisted a scarlet handkerchief round her raven hair, and those black eyes of hers flashed and danced and sparkled under the Phrygian cap of Liberty. Her neat black gown fitted her *svelte* figure to perfection. Her energy, her vivacity, her industry were inexhaustible. Her hands were as the hands of Briareus for serving the patriots with their coffee, their rolls and butter. Her gay voice sounded above the other voices in the *mêlée* of wit and patriotism. She sang as she went to and fro among the little tables, waiting upon her patrons; and her song was always the newest ballad with which the ballad-mongers were undermining the government, the "Lillibullero" of the hour.

"Je sais le plan de Trochu,
Plan, plan, plan, plan, plan!"

Sometimes, in a moment of exaltation, her customers would call for a stave of the "Marseillaise" or the "Ça ira," and then the clink of cups and saucers and knives and forks upon the tables was like the clash of swords.

But, tempting as these morning assemblies of the patriotic and the idle might be to a man of Gaston's temperament, he never crossed the threshold of Suzon Michel's shop. He passed

her door twice a day, or oftener, on his way to and fro the newspaper office; he heard the chorus of voices inside, but he never entered the shop. He had a feeling that loyalty to Kathleen forbade him to hold any commune with Suzon. And what need had he to take his cup of coffee from a shopkeeper's hand when the faithful wife was waiting for him in her bower on the third story, watching the little brass coffee-pot simmering upon a handful of charcoal? One could not be too sparing of fire in these days, though one were ever so sure that the Prussians must retire from the enemy's soil before winter began in real earnest. The elements would fight upon the side of the besieged. That vast army, shivering yonder under canvas, must beat a retreat at double-quick time before Jack Frost.

It was on one of the clear gray afternoons of October that Gaston stood resting upon his gun, at his post on the rampart of the fort, gazing with dreamy eyes upon a landscape of poetic beauty, the deep rich colouring of autumn subdued into perfect harmony by the tender mists which shadowed without concealing wood and river, vineyard and field, while far off in the dimness of the horizon his fancy conjured up the dark swarm of Prussian helmets, blackening the edge of the landscape. The atmosphere was full of

peace, and the silence of this lonely outpost was broken only by the *qui vive* of the sentries and the chime of distant church-clocks. A good place for a poet to brood upon the creations of his fancy, or for a journalist to hatch a leading article.

While Gaston stood at ease, with his eyes wandering far afield towards the distant foe, and his fancies straying still further in a day-dream of universal peace, liberty, art for art's sake, and all the impossibilities of the socialist's Utopia, a sound of strident laughter, of deep bass voices and nasal trebles, broke like a volley of musketry through the stillness of the soft gray atmosphere, and presently half a dozen képis, or National Guard, considerably the worse for *le petit bleu*, came swaggering along the rampart, escorting a young woman, whose scarlet headgear shone in the distance like a spot of flame.

It was Madame Michel, with the little red kerchief twisted coquettishly round her sleek black hair. She wore a tight cloth jacket, frogged *à la militaire*, over her black gown, the skirt of which was short enough to show an arched instep and a neat ankle. She had put on a half-virile, half-soldierly air, in honour of the times; and her walk, her look, her manner, were already prophetic of the coming pétroleuse.

She came along the rampart with her patriots, who were pointing out the merits and faults of the fortifications, explaining, showing her this and that, swaggering, bragging, abusing Bismarck and his Pandours, singing snatches of patriotic verse. She was close to Gaston before she recognised him.

Then their eyes met, suddenly, his returning from the far distance, hers staring intently. Recognition came in a flash, and the rich carnation of her cheek faded to an almost deadly pallor.

"What, is it you, Citoyen Mortemar, so far from the Rue Gît le Cœur? What, are you too in the National Guard? I thought so devoted a husband would have found an excuse from service. I thought you would be lying at the feet of your English-Irish wife all day, like Paul and Virginia in their far-off island."

"The nation cannot spare even lovers," answered Gaston lightly. "Hector had to leave Andromache; and my Andromache would despise a husband who did less than his duty. So far our duties have been light enough, and give no ground for boasting."

"But let them come on, those Uhlans, those *gredins*, those—" here came a string of double-barrelled substantive adjectives and adjective substantives, too familiar afterwards in *Le Père Du-*

chêne—"let them come!" growled the wine-soaked patriot, "and we will give them—"*cré nom!* what is there which we will not give them?"

And then the tipsy patriots retired to an angle of the fortification, and began to play the intellectual game of *bouchon*, forgetful of the lady whom they had escorted so far, for an afternoon on the walls of Paris.

Gaston shouldered his chassepot, and began to walk slowly up and down. Suzon followed him, came close to his side, and hissed in his ear,

"And so you are happy with your child wife?"

"I am as happy as Fate ever allowed a man to be in this world. Fate gave me the fairest and best for my companion, and then said, 'Thou shalt find thou hast filled thy cup of joy in a day of trouble and war. Thou shalt drink only a drop at a time—a drop now and then—as the miser spends his gold.'"

"Lucky for you, lucky for her that it is so," retorted Suzon fiercely, "for you may so much the less soon grow weary of your waxwork wife."

"I shall never weary of her," said Gaston. "Every day draws us nearer. We may tire of life and its troubles, never of each other."

"So you think now, while this fancy of yours has all the gloss of freshness. But you will weary

of her. She is pretty enough, I grant you; lovely, if you like; but her face has no more expression than a June lily; and you, who have a mind full of force and fire, must weary of such placid inanity. Do you think I do not know you—I who have heard you talk in the days gone by—I who was your *confidante* when you were penniless and unknown? You are beginning to be famous now. You sign your articles, and men talk about them and about the writer. You are pointed at in the street. But I admired you when none other admired you. I believed in you when you were nobody."

"You were always very amiable, citoyenne, and I hope I did not prove myself unworthy of your esteem," said Gaston, with a ceremonious bow.

He had an idea that a storm was coming, and he wanted to ward off the lightning if possible, by taking things easily.

"You proved yourself a seducer and a liar!" she answered savagely, her splendid eyes flaming as she looked at him, one red spot on either cheek, like a burning coal, her white lips quivering.

She had given herself over to the rule of her passionate nature in this new period of tumult and uncertainty, a time when all the old boun-

daries seemed to be swept away, the floodgates of passion opened. A queen, a goddess, in her chosen circle, she had come to think herself a being bound by no law, possessing the divine right of beauty and wit, free to pour out her love or her venom upon whom she would; and to-day Fate had brought her face to face with the man to whom she had given the impassioned love of her too fervid nature, for whose sake she had been, and must ever be, marble to every other lover.

"You are mad," he said quietly, "and your words are the words of a madwoman."

"They are true words. Seducer—for you seduced me into loving you—yes, as few men have ever been loved, as few women know how to love. Seducer! yes. Your every word, your every look, meant seduction, in those dear days when you and I wandered homewards in the midnight and moonlight, and loitered on the bridge or on the quay, and drank each other's whispers, and looked into each other's eyes, and our hands trembled as they touched. Liar! for though you never declared yourself my lover, all your words were steeped in love. When we have sat together, side by side in the theatre, my head leaning against your shoulder, our hands clasped as we drew nearer to each other, feeling

as if we were alone in the darkened house—what need of words then to promise love? Your every look, your every touch, was a promise; and all those promises you broke when you deserted me for your new fancy; and by every touch of your hand, by every look in your eyes, I charge you with having promised me your lifelong love, I charge you with having lied to me!"

There was no doubt as to the reality of her feeling, the intensity of her sense of wrong done to her in those days of the past. Gaston stood before her, downcast and conscience-stricken.

Yes, if passionate looks and tender claspings of tremulous hands meant anything, he had so far pledged his faith—he was in so much a liar. His boyish fancy had been caught by this southern beauty, by this passionate nature, which made an atmosphere of warmth around it, and gave to the calm moonbeams of a Parisian midnight the seducing softness of the torrid zone. He had been drawn to her in those moonlit hours as young hearts are drawn together under the southern cross; and then came morning, and worldly wisdom and the sense of his own dignity; and he told himself, with a half-guilty feeling, that those looks and whispers on the moonlit quay meant nothing. A pretty woman who kept a popular *crêmerie* must have admirers by the score; and

when she was not being escorted to the Porte St. Martin by him, was doubtless tripping as lightly to the Château d'Eau with somebody else.

These were the *amours passagères* of youth, which count for nothing in the sum of a man's life.

Then came the new and better love. Kathleen's fair young face became the pole-star of his destiny; and from that hour he held himself aloof from Suzon Michel. And now she came upon him, like a guilty conscience, and charged him with having lied to her.

"I am very sorry that you should have taken our friendship so seriously," he said quietly. "I thought that I was only one among your many admirers—that you had such lovers as I by the score. So pretty a woman could not fail to attract suitors."

"I had admirers, as you say, by the score; but not one for whom I cared, not one upon whose breast my head ever rested as it lay on yours that night at the street-corner, when you kissed me for the first—last—time. It was within a week of that kiss you abandoned me for ever."

"A foolish kiss," said Gaston, again trying to take things lightly; "but those eyes of yours had a magical influence in the lamplight. My dear soul, we were only children, straying a little way

along a flowery path which leads to a wood full of wild beasts and all manner of horrors. Why make a fuss about it, since we stopped in good time, and never went into the wood?"

This was a kind of argument hardly calculated to pacify a jealous woman. Suzon took no notice of it.

"What was she better than I—that fair haired Irish girl—that you should forsake me to marry her?"

"Why make unflattering comparisons? I only know that from the hour I first saw her I lived a new life. You were charming, but you belonged to the old life; and so I was obliged to sing the old song:

'Adieu, paniers, vendanges sont faites!' "

"*C'est ça.* You threw me aside as if I had been an empty basket after the vintage. But the vintage is not over yet, or at least the wine has still to be made, and I know what colour it will be."

"Indeed!" he said gaily, rolling up a cigarette.

His watch was just expiring; and even if it were not, the discipline on the walls was not severe.

"It will be red, red, red—the colour of blood."

The game of *bouchon* had just ended in a

tempest of oaths and squabbling, and the patriots came swaggering and staggering towards the spot where Suzon stood with gloomy brow and eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Come, Citoyenne Michel, come to the canteen, and empty a bottle of *petit bleu* with us. *'Faut rincer le bec avant de partir.* Let it not be said that the National Guard are without hospitality."

CHAPTER VII.

"HEADSTRONG LIBERTY IS LASHED WITH WOE."

NEW YEAR'S DAY had come and gone—a dark and dreary New Year for many a severed household; the mother and her children afar, the father lonely in Paris, not knowing if the letter which he writes daily to the wife he loves may not be written to the dead—for it is months since he has had tidings of wife or child; and who can tell where the angel of death may have visited? A change had come over the great city and the spirits of the people—brave still, bearing their burden gallantly, still crying their cry of "No surrender!" but gay and light of heart no longer, bowed down by the weight of ever increasing wretchedness, pinched by the sharp pangs of hunger, enfeebled by disease, tortured by the bitter cold of a severe winter, which just now is the hardest trial of all. And now, in these dark days after Christmas, the ice is broken, the siege, for which Paris has been waiting patiently three months, begins in bitter earnest, and the thunder

of the guns shakes earth and sky. The Line, the Mobile, the National Guard, all do their duty; but at best they can only die bravely for a cause that has long been lost. The bombardment ceases not day or night—now on this side, now on that. In the trenches the men suffer horribly. The snow falls on the living and the dead. Every sortie results in heavy loss. The ambulances are all full to overflowing. Trochu, the irresolute, the man of proclamations and manifestoes, has given place to Vinoy; but what generalship can hold a beleaguered city against those grim captains Famine and Death?

The women bear their burden with a quiet resignation which is among the most heroic things in history. Day after day, in the early winter dawn, they stand in the dismal train of householders waiting for the allotted portion of meat—a portion so scanty that it seems bitterest irony to carry it home to a hungry family. There they stand—ladies, servants, workwomen, from the highest to the lowest—buffeted by the savage north-easter, snowed upon, hailed upon, shivering, pale, exhausted, but divinely patient, each feeling that in this silent suffering she contributes her infinitesimal share of heroism to the defence of her country. So long as her rulers will hold out, so long as her soldiers will fight and die, so long

will the women of France submit and suffer. Their voices will never be joined in the cry, "Surrender for our sakes."

The little children are fading off the face of this troubled scene. That is the worst martyrdom of all for the mothers. The little faces are growing pinched and haggard, the fragile forms are drooping, drooping, day by day. The mothers and fathers hope against hope. In a day or two the siege will be raised; milk and bread, fuel, comfort, luxury, the joy and light of life, will return to those desolate households; and the drooping children will revive and grow strong again. And, while the mothers hope, the little ones are dying, and the little coffins are seen, in mournful processions, day by day and hour by hour, in the cold cheerless streets.

At the butchers'-shops, at the bakeries, there the same dismal train waits day after day. Everything is scarce. Butter is forty-five francs a pound; the coarsest grease, rank fat, which the servants would throw into the grease-tub in times of plenty, is sold for eighteen francs a pound. Gruyère cheese is a thing beyond all price, and is only bought by the rich, who wish to offer a costly present, like a basket of strawberries in February or peaches in March. Potatoes are twenty-five francs a bushel; a cabbage six francs;

and garden-stuff, which last year one would have hardly offered to the rabbits, is now the luxurious accompaniment of the *pot-au-feu de cheval.* There is no more gas for the street-lamps, and the once brilliant Lutetia is a city of Cimmerian darkness. Bitterest scarcity of all, fuel has become prodigiously dear; and the poor are shivering, dying in their desolate garrets, pinched and blue with the cold of a hard winter.

Even among the well-to-do classes funds are running low. Provisions at siege prices have exhausted the purses of middle-class citizens. Stocks have been sold at a terrible loss, capital has been exhausted. Ruin and hunger stare in at the windows, and haunt the snowy night like spectres.

For the poor the struggle is still sharper; but the poor are familiar with the pinch of poverty, with the pangs of self-denial. And then, perhaps, there is more done for the indigent in this day of national calamity than was done for them in the golden years of prosperity; albeit the Empire, whatever its shortcomings, was not neglectful of the houseless and the hungry.

In all these troubled days—with surrender and shame far away yonder at Metz, with defeat on this side and on that, here a general slain and there a gallant leader sacrificed, a little gain one day only to be counterbalanced by a greater loss

the next, a threatened revolution, Flourens and his crew strutting, booted and spurred, on the tables in the Hôtel de Ville, little explosions of popular feeling at Belleville, semi-revolt at Montmartre—through all this time of wild fears and wilder hopes the *Red Flag* has been boldly unfurled in the face of Paris, and has managed to pay its contributors. When bread and meat are so dear, who would stint himself of his favourite newspaper, in which, for two sous, he may read words that burn like vitriol, sentences that sound like the hissing of vinegar flung upon white-hot iron? The *Red Flag* finds some pretty strong language for the expression of its opinions about William, and Bismarck, and Moltke, and the hordes of black helmets yonder; but this language is mild as compared with the venom which it spits upon the Empire that is vanished —the Man of Sedan, the Man of Metz, the Emperor who surrendered Empire and army—all that could be surrendered—in the first hour of reverse; the general who kept the flower of the French army locked up within the walls of a beleaguered city, tied hand and foot, when they were pining to be up and doing, hungering for the fray, eager to fling themselves into the teeth of the foe, to cut their way to liberty or to death, only to hand them over to the enemy like a flock

of sheep when he found that his imperialist game was played out, and the stakes lost irretrievably.

At last came that which seemed the crowning humiliation, a capitulation which, to the soul of the patriot, was more shameful than that of Sedan, more irreparable than Strassburg, more fatal than Metz. Paris surrendered her forts, and opened her gates to the invader; France gave up her provinces, and pledged herself to the payment of a monstrous indemnity. The flag of the Germanic Confederation floated above Mont Valérien, and the Guard of the Emperor of Germany defiled along the Avenue of the Grande Armée to encamp in the Champs Elysées. Dark and mournful was the aspect of Paris on that never-to-be-forgotten day. The populace held themselves aloof from the region occupied by the invaders, as from the scene of a pestilence. Those who came as captors were as prisoners in the conquered city. The theatres were closed, and Paris mourned in gloom and silence for the ruin of France. And on the morning of departure, when, after an occupation of only twenty-four hours, the barbarous flood swept back, the Parisian *gamin* was seen pursuing the rearguard of William's soldiery, burning perfumes on red-hot shovels, as if to purify the air after the passage of some loathsome beast.

Unhappily for Paris there were worse enemies

than William and his square-heads lurking in the background, enemies long suspected and feared, and now to be revealed in all their power for evil.

With the opening of the gates began an emigration of the respectable classes. Husbands and fathers hastened to rejoin their families, provincials returned to their provinces—one hundred thousand of the National Guard, good citizens, brave, loyal, devoted to the cause of order, are said to have left Paris at this time. Those who remained behind were for the most part an armed mob, demoralised by idleness, by drink, by the teaching of a handful of rabid Republicans, the master-spirits of Belleville and Montmartre.

Too soon the storm burst. There is no darker day in the history of France than this 18th of March 1871, on which Paris found itself given over to a horde of which it knew neither the strength nor the malignity, but from which it feared the worst. Hideous faces, which in peaceful times lurk in the hidden depths of a city, showed themselves in the open day, at every street corner, irony on the lip and menace in the eye. A day which began with the seizure of the cannon at Chaumont and Montmartre by the Communards, and the desertion of the troops of the Line to the insurgents, ended with the murder of

Generals Lecomte and Clément Thomas, and the withdrawal of the government and the loyal troops to Versailles.

When night fell Paris was abandoned to a new power, which called itself Central Committee of the Federation; and it seemed that two hundred and fifty battalions of the National Guard had become Federals. They were for the most part Federals without knowing why or wherefore. They knew as little of the chiefs who were to command them as that doomed city upon which they were too soon to establish a reign of ignominy and terror. But the Central Committee, sustained by the International and its powerful organisation, was strong enough to command in a disorganised and abandoned city; and on the 19th of March began the great orgy of the Commune, the rule of blood and fire. The offal of journalism, the scum of the gaols, sat in the seat of judgment. Rigault, Ferré, Eudes, Sérizier—Blanquistes, Hébertistes—these were now the masters of Paris. They held the prisons; they commanded the National Guard. They made laws and unmade them; they drank and smoked and rioted in the Hôtel de Ville; they held their obscene orgies in palaces, in churches, in the public offices, and the gaols, where the innocent and the noble were languishing in a shameful bondage, waiting for a too probable

death. There were those who asked whether William and Bismarck would not have been better than these.

For Gaston Mortemar, an enthusiastic believer in Communism and the International, it seemed as if this new reign meant regeneration. He was revolted by the murder of the two generals, but he saw in that crime the work of a military mob. He knew but little of the men who were now at the helm. Assy, one of the best of them, had protested against the violence of his colleagues, and had been flung into prison. Flourens, the beloved of Belleville, was killed in a skirmish with the Versaillais, while the Commune was still young. Hard for a man of intellect and honour to believe in the scum of humanity which now ruled at the Hôtel de Ville, and strutted in tinsel and feathers, like mountebanks at a fair. But Gaston had faith in the cause if he doubted the men. That red rag flying from the pinnacles, where the tricolour had so lately hung, was, to his mind, a symbol of man's equal rights, the uprising of a down-trodden people, the divine right of every man to be his own master. For this cause he wrote with all the fervour and force of his pen.

The arrest of the Archbishop and his fellow-sufferers, on the 6th of April, was the first shock

which disturbed Gaston Mortemar's faith in the men who ruled Paris. That act appeared unjustifiable even in the eyes of one who held the sanctity of the priesthood somewhat lightly. The spotless reputation and noble character of the chief victim made the deed sacrilege. Gaston did not measure the words in which he denounced this arrest. He had expressed himself strongly also upon the imprisonment of Citoyen Bonjean, the good President. From that hour the *Red Flag* was a suspected paper. The man who was not with the Commune, heart and hand, in its worst follies, its bloodiest crimes, was a marked man.

The denunciation of Gustave Chaudey, the journalist, by Vermesch, the editor of the infamous *Père Duchêne*, followed within twenty-four hours by his arrest and imprisonment, was the next rude blow. Again Gaston denounced the tyrants of the Hôtel de Ville: and this time retaliation was immediate. The *Red Flag* was suppressed, and proprietor and contributors were threatened with arrest. Gaston's occupation was gone. His economies of the past had been exhausted by the evil days of the siege, and he found himself penniless.

He was not altogether disheartened. He sat himself down to write satirical ballads, which were printed, secretly, at the old office, and sold

by the hawkers in the streets; and in these days of fever-heat and perpetual agitation, the public pence flowed freely for the purchase of squibs which hit right or left, Versailles or Paris, Republic or Commune. The little household in the Rue Gît le Cœur, a fragile bark to be tossed on such a tempestuous sea, managed thus to breast the waves gallantly for a little while longer, and Durand's kindly offer of help was refused, as not yet needed.

Soon after hearing of the arrest of the Archbishop and the other priests, Gaston made a pilgrimage a little way out of Paris. He went to visit his old friends the Dominican monks, at the school of Albert the Great, and to ascertain for himself whether any storm-cloud was darkening over those defenceless heads. Who could tell where those in power might look for their next victims? Priests and *sergents de ville* were the *bêtes noires* of the Communards.

All was tranquil at the Dominican School. The house had been turned into an ambulance by the fathers during the siege; and it was still used for the same purpose under the Commune. The Dominicans could have no affection for a government which turned churches into clubs, forbade public worship, and imprisoned priests; but they were ready to give shelter to the wounded

Federals, and to attend them with that divine charity which asks no questions as to the creed of the sufferer. They had a right to suppose that the Geneva Cross would protect their house.

Out of doors they did not pass without insults. The house had the reputation of being rich, and the Communards began to talk of hidden treasures, and of a reactionary spirit among the fathers. The Dominicans let them say their say, turned a deaf ear to opprobrious epithets, appeared in public as little as possible, and confided themselves to the mercy of God. Gaston saw Father Captier, the good prior, offered to serve him in any way within his power, which, unhappily, was of the smallest, thanked him for all his goodness in the past, and talked with him of the future, which was not full of promise. And so they parted, each trying to cheer the other with hopeful speech, each oppressed by the dread of impending troubles.

Sérizier, the colonel of the 13th legion, had established his head-quarters in a nobleman's château adjoining the Dominican School, and he looked with no friendly eye upon the fathers, whose garden lay within sight of his drawing-room windows. The seizure of the fort at Issy aggravated the already dangerous position of the monks. The Federals, forced to evacuate their

position, fell back upon Arcueuil and Cachan, and the 13th legion encamped in the environs of the Dominican School. The fathers began to fear that the Geneva Cross would not protect them for ever.

On May 17th a fire broke out in the roof of the château occupied by Sérizier. The Dominicans hurried to the rescue, tucked up their robes, and succeeded in extinguishing the flames. Sérizier sent for them, and they appeared before him, expecting to be thanked and praised.

To their surprise, they were treated as spies, *sergents de ville* in disguise; they were accused of having themselves set fire to the roof, which was to serve as a signal to the Versaillais. They protested, but in vain.

"We shall make a quick finish of the shavenpolls," said Sérizier.

On the 19th May, Léo Meillet, commander of the fort at Bicêtre, was ordered to arrest the Dominicans, with all their subordinates. To accomplish this perilous expedition he required no less than two battalions of Federals, one of which was the notorious 101st, commanded by Sérizier.

Gaston Mortemar heard of the intended arrest on the evening of the 18th. He spent the greater part of the night going from place to place, interviewing those delegates of whom he knew some-

thing, and from whose influence he might hope something. He urged each of these to strike a blow in defence of those guiltless monks, to interfere to prevent an arrest which might end in murder. But in vain. The chiefs of the Commune had grander schemes in hand than the rescue of a handful of harmless monks.

Gaston was at the school early on the 19th. If he could do nothing to help his old friends, he could at least be near them in their day of peril. He was with them when the 101st battalion invested their house, and he shared their peril. Sérizier recognised him as the orator of the Folies Bergères, the editor of the suppressed *Red Flag* —a paper which had published some hard things about the colonel of the 101st. He ordered Mortemar to be arrested with the monks.

"So you are a pupil of the Dominicans," he exclaimed—"a worthy pupil of such masters. We know now where you learnt to spit venom at honest patriots. You shall stew together in the same sauce!"

The capture was made, after but little resistance. Father Captier, feeling the responsibility of his office as prior, entreated to be allowed to put his seal on the outer doors of the house. This grace was accorded without difficulty. Those who

granted the boon well knew the futility of such a precaution.

At seven o'clock in the evening the prisoners arrived at the fort of Bicêtre, after having endured every kind of outrage on the way there. They were flung into a yard, huddled together like frightened sheep, standing bareheaded under frequent showers, stared at like wild beasts by the National Guard. At one o'clock in the morning they were thrown into a casemate, were they could lie on the ground and rest their heads against the stone wall. In vain the Dominicans asserted their innocence, and demanded to be set at liberty. The only answers to their prayers were the obscene songs of their custodians.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIRT WITH FIRE.

On the 21st, Father Captier was taken before a magistrate in a room in the fort, and submitted to an informal examination. Then followed two weary days, the 22nd and 23rd, during which the prisoners were left without food; and while the monks languished and hungered in the gloom of their prison the good people of the Commune were busy with the work of spoliation. Upon an order given by Léo Meillet, two battalions of Federal soldiers entered the school at Arcueil, violated seals, broke open doors, and carried off every object of value, including even fifteen thousand francs in railway shares, the savings of the servants attached to the establishment. These were impounded as national property, and passed by a kind of communistic legerdemain into pockets which were never known to disgorge their contents. A dozen ammunition-wagons and eight hired vehicles were needed to carry off the spoil.

The school only escaped being burnt to the

ground by reason of its well-filled cellars. Once having descended to these lower depths, the Federals had no desire to return to the surface, until they had done justice to the Dominican wines. They drank and wallowed there side by side, like swine in the mire, till the hour for burning was past, and thus the school of Albert the Great escaped the flames.

On the following day Léo Meillet and the officers began to feel themselves in danger at the Fort of Bicêtre. The army was drawing near. They resolved to evacuate the fort and fall back upon Paris, where numerous barricades, well provided with artillery, made resistance possible, and where the steep and narrow streets, the labyrinthine windings and twisting of courts and alleys, in the old quarter of the city made flight and concealment easy.

Carriages, carts, wagons, were hurriedly requisitioned on every hand, and then came a flight so eager that the prisoners in their casemate were forgotten.

"Thank God!" cried Gaston, with a wild throbbing at his heart, forgetting, for the moment, that he was an infidel. "The Versallais will be here in time to save us." And the good Dominicans, the men who had turned their house into an ambulance during the siege and the Commune,

and who had nursed the wounded Federals without a question as to their belief or their impiety, began to offer up their thanksgivings, and murmurpsalms of triumph and rejoicing—those versicles which Jewish captives of old had sung by the waters of Babylon.

Alas for those pious hearts uplifted in gratitude to the great Deliverer! not by Versailles, was their deliverance to come. They were to pass to paradise by a rougher road. Their joy had been premature, for they had reckoned without Sérizier.

And yet this Sérizier was one of the master-fiends in the Parisian pandemonium. A currier by trade, he had been in early manhood the tyrant and the terror of a great currier's factory at Belleville, and in the revolution of '48 he had been leader of the mob which hanged the proprietor of the factory at his own door. He had been condemned for some political offence during the Empire, and had taken refuge in Belgium. He reappeared in Paris soon after the 4th of September, and played an important part in the siege.

After March 18th he became secretary to Léo Meillet, and later chief of the 13th legion. He commanded twelve battalions, which fought well at Issy, at Châtillon, and at the Hautes-Bruyères. Amongst these battalions there was one which he

favoured above all the others, the 101st, his own particular battalion, composed of his friends and companions.

A man of fiery temperament, a great talker, a deep drinker, a workman without industry, living upon money extorted from the public assistance, Sérizier exercised a strong influence upon the ignorant and brutal beings who surrounded him. He was feared and obeyed by all the 13th arrondissement, which trembled before him. His hatred against the priests was a passion that almost touched on lunacy. He had profaned the churches by his foul orgies, and it was only the entry of the troops from Versailles which stopped him from selling saintly relics and sacramental plate by auction. Assassin and incendiary, it was his hand which fired the famous manufactory of Gobelins tapestry.

He was a man of medium height, square-shouldered, eyes shifty and restless, forehead low, lips thick and heavy, receding chin, the head of a bulldog. His voice was harsh and hoarse, his breath exhaled cognac. When he was angry that rough voice broke out in cursings and fury, more like the howling of a savage dog than the accents of humanity.

Sérizier had his own particular prison as well as his own particular battalion. A house in the

Avenue d'Italie had been transformed into a gaol; and here this man kept those victims who were known as his prisoners. At the final day he cleared his prison by a massacre.

Sérizier had not forgotten the Dominicans and their companions. At his bidding a detachment of soldiers came in search of them, and they were marched into Paris by the Barrière Fontainebleau, amidst hootings and insults and curses from the crowd, a little company of twenty hostages, five of whom wore the flowing black and white robes of the order.

No help from the French army. All yesterday they had been held at bay by the Federal artillery at Montrouge, and were only able to cross the ravines of La Bièvre on the morning of the 25th.

The prisoners were hurried along, almost at a run, to the gaol in the Avenue d'Italie. Embarrassed by the voluminous folds of their robes they did not always walk fast enough, whereupon the soldiers struck them with the butt-end of their guns, calling out, "Quick, magpie!" in mockery of their black and white raiment: and so to the prison, which was already full to the brim, containing ninety-seven prisoners arrested in that district, and detained at Citoyen Sérizier's good pleasure. Bobèche, the gaoler, fatigued by

having to write such a list of names, had gone out to refresh himself with a drink. While he was away the Communards came to the prison to ask the Dominicans to help in making the barricades; but the deputy-gaoler having some respect for the religious character sent fourteen National Guards, imprisoned for some military irregularity, instead of the priests. Bobèche, returning immediately after, was furious with his subordinate, and accused him of shedding the blood of patriots in order to spare the monks. He had a detachment of the 101st battalion at his heels, and he ordered those tonsured scoundrels to be brought out.

Bertrand, the subordinate, yielded after some opposition, and opened the door of the gaol.

"Come, magpies," cried Bobèche, "off with you to the barricade!"

The Dominicans came out into the avenue, where they saw the detachment of the 101st, with Sérizier at their head. This time they believed that all was over; but they were deceived, for their agony was to last a little longer.

Father Cotrault, the purveyor, stopped on the threshold of the prison.

"We will go no further," he said; "we are men of peace. Our religion forbids us to shed blood; we cannot fight, and we will not go to the

barricade; but even under fire we will search for your wounded, and succour them."

This compromise would not have been accepted by Sérizier, but the Communist soldiers were wavering, they were crying out that it would soon be impossible to hold the barricade against the hail of bullets from the Versaillais.

"Enough," said Sérizier to Father Cotrault; "promise to look after our wounded."

"Yes, we promise," answered the monk; "and you know it is what we have always done."

Sérizier made a sign to Bobèche, and the prisoners were bundled back into the gaol. But they no longer deceived themselves with false hopes. They knew the respite was but brief. They prayed together, and made confession to each other. They might have been spared, perhaps; but the news brought to Sérizier was exasperating and alarming. Some men flying from the Quartier Latin to fight again in the Avenue d'Italie told how the Panthéon, the great citadel of the insurrection, had been taken by the Versaillais before there had been time to fire the mine which would have shattered dome and walls, arches and columns, in one vast heap of ruin. They told how Millière, the chief of the insurgents in this quarter, had been shot, and that the French troops occupied the prison of La

Santé. The circle which was soon to enclose the Communards of the 13th arrondissement was growing narrower and narrower.

What should they do? Fly, or stand their ground to the death?

A great many of the National Guard made off.

Sérizier gathered himself together for a final effort.

"Burn!" he gasped; "we must burn everything!"

He rushed into a wine-shop and drank glass after glass of brandy. His wolfish soul, excited by alcohol, by fighting, by defeat, by the sight of the blood which reddened the road and the pavement, appeared in all its hideousness.

"Ah, has the end come so soon!" he cried, striking his clenched fist upon the pewter counter. "So be it! Everybody must die!"

He ran back to the avenue.

"Come, come," he roared, "men of the right metal, to smash the skulls of those magpies!"

A little crowd of Communards answered to his call, and, in advance of the band, two women presented themselves.

They were both furies—both had streaming locks of tangled hair, which were hideously suggestive of Medusa's snaky tresses; but one of the furies was young, and would have been hand-

some if her face had not been smeared and spattered with blood, and blackened by gunpowder. She wore the costume of a *vivandière*, and had once been smart; but the gold-lace on her jacket hung in shreds, the blue cloth was stained with blood and mire. She carried a gun, which, in her exhaustion, she handed to Sérizier, signing to him to reload it for her. She had hardly breath enough left for speech.

"The priests," she murmured hoarsely, as Sérizier gave her back the loaded gun; "are they to be finished—at once?"

"At once," he answered; "there is no time for ceremony with those scoundrels. They have had their day, and have made fools of you all long enough, with their mummeries—men, women, and children."

"They have never fooled me," answered the woman; "I am a Voltairian."

"Ah, *ce bon* Voltaire; if he had lasted till our time we should have shown him some pretty farces," said Sérizier, turning away from her to give his orders.

While he ranged his men along the avenue, and talked apart with Bobèche the gaoler, the woman in the *vivandière* dress stood leaning on her gun, looking along the road, through dim smoke-clouds and dust and fire.

It was four o'clock in the warm May afternoon—May on the edge of June. The western horizon of Paris was hidden behind the smoke of incendiary fires; the ground trembled with the force of the cannonade. The woman wiped the sweat and mire from her face with the sleeve of her jacket, and looked across the scene of ruin and desolation with fiery eyes. She looked yonder towards the towers of Notre Dame, towards the Quai des Augustins, and the labyrinth of little streets behind those old roofs.

"Not much chance of wedded bliss for those two now," she said to herself. "Their honeymoon was short; but her misery shall be long. She and her sister are shut in their lodgings, expecting to be burnt alive every hour; and he is in prison—what prison, I wonder?"

The woman was Suzon Michel, and the man of whom she was thinking as she stood at ease by her gun, waiting to do her part, as a strong-minded woman and a patriot, in the slaughter of the priests, was Gaston Mortemar.

Since his arrest she had been able to learn nothing about him. She had been told by her friends the Communards that he had been arrested on account of something he had written in his paper. More than this they would not or could not tell her. There were so many prisons

in Paris, all teeming with life, like beehives; there were such innumerable arrests. People hardly cared to inquire why their neighbours were carried off, or whither. Human feelings, friendship, brotherly love were apt to become deadened in that pandemonium.

Since the week of fighting and fires began, Suzon had been in the thick of all the strife. She had carried her can of petroleum as bravely as any of those bearded ruffians who pretended to make light of her services. She had helped in the fires, she had helped in the carnage, like the very spirit of evil. It was not arson, it was not murder. It was only justice, an eye for an eye.

"They are killing our brothers and friends yonder," said the assassins, as they shot down new victims.

Mercy at such a time would be cowardice. Only a craven would hold his hand when there was such a grand chance of avenging the wrongs of nobody in particular.

Suzon was drunk with blood, half-blinded by fire. Those flashing eyes of hers, bright as they were, saw all things dimly, through a fiery haze.

The priests—yes, she would help to slaughter them; not because she knew anything about this particular brood of *calotins*, but because she hated

all priests. They had done her no wrong: but her pious neighbours had despised her for keeping away from church: they had thrown their religion in her face: they had scorned her for her infidelity.

"Beware of that woman!" said an old man whom she had offended. "The woman who never crosses the threshold of a church belongs to a venomous species."

Yes, she would help in the good work. How the earth shivered under that awful cannonade! The enemy was at the door; nearer and nearer came the thunder of the guns. The deadly rain from the mitrailleuses came fast as the heavy drops of a thunder shower. The afternoon sun looked red as blood yonder, as its lurid rays pierced the smoke. The circle was narrowing, narrowing, narrowing, closing in upon them like a ring of fire. Whom would they spare, those Versaillais devils? Not one. Universal carnage would change the streets of Paris to rivers of blood, lit by a city in flames. Not a life, not a house would be spared.

"Let us begin!" shrieked Suzon, beside herself; "let us work with such a good will that there shall be nothing left for those others to do."

"Are you ready?" asked Sérizier, facing the

door of the prison, with his assassins ranged on either side of him.

"No one of them shall escape, my general," answered Suzon, grasping her gun.

Her voice was hoarse and rough, like his own. From head to heel, mind, soul, body, the creature had unsexed herself: and these men-women were even more savage than the devil-men of those days, for they thought their infamy heroism and their cruelty courage. Not one of these furies, waving her petroleum-can, shouldering her chasse-pot, but fancied herself a modern Maid of Orleans.

And now the victims were driven into the street, like sheep to the slaughter-house.

"Pass, one by one," cried Bobèche the gaoler, who held his six-year-old son by the hand.

Was it not well for the boy to see the tonsured heads laid low? It is thus France rears her patriots—young Romans suckled by the wolf Revolution.

The Dominicans, the school-servants, the journalist crossed the fatal threshold. The first to pass was Father Cotrault, and at the third step, he fell, struck by a bullet.

The Prior turned to his companions.

"Come, my friends, for the love of God," he said, in his mild voice; and he and his little train

rushed into the open, and ran athwart the rain of bullets.

Suzon flung herself into the midst of the road, at the risk of being shot down in the *mêlée*. She loaded and reloaded her chassepot, crying, "Cowards, cowards! they are running away!"

It was not a butchery, but a *battue*. The poor human game tried to flee, hid itself behind the trees, slipped along under the lee of the houses. Women at open windows clapped their hands and shrieked with joy as they watched the sport; in the street men shook their fists at the victims; the scene was alive with insult and laughter, voices that sounded like the howling of furious beasts. It was a new carnival of flowers and sugar-plums; only the flowers were insult and outrage, the sugar-plums were bullets.

Some of the more active gained the side streets, and escaped the leaden shower. Five of the priests, seven of the school-servants, were shot down in a heap before the Chapelle Bréa.

"Fire, fire upon them!" cried Sérizier, when a convulsive movement showed that life still throbbed amidst this mass of death, and one poor bleeding form that had faintly stirred received thirty-one bullets.

"See," cried Suzon, as Mortemar, slender, active, lithe, with youth and vigour on his side,

sped lightly along the boulevard and vanished at a distant turning, "there goes one that will cheat us!"

She rushed off in pursuit of him, breathless, panting, mad with rage. Two of Sérizier's lambs ran with her, pleasantly excited by the chase. The hunters reached the turning, and there, a few paces down the narrow street, leaning against a lamp-post, exhausted by the rapidity of his flight, stood their quarry.

The men fired instantly. Suzon lifted her gun to her shoulder, and then suddenly let it fall to her side. She dashed her hand across her eyes. Was it a dream? Was she for ever haunted, waking as well as sleeping, by that one face? Through the haze of blood and fire she saw the face of the man she loved —loved and hated, and hated and loved. She scarce knew which feeling was dominant in a breast where both fires burned so fiercely. She saw him, pale as ashes, his livid lips parted, his eyes staring wildly, as men look into the face of sudden violent death; hunted humanity at bay, the hounds closing round, the huntsman ready with his knife. A thin stream of blood trickled down the pale face. One of the bullets had grazed his temple.

"Hold, hold!" shrieked Suzon, throwing aside

her gun, and stretching her arms wide in passionate entreaty; "do not fire!"

Too late; another volley whistled past her, as she sank on her knees, screaming, pleading, blaspheming. She did not know how to pray.

Gaston Mortemar fell without a groan.

Suzon sprang to her feet, picked up her gun, and struck at the Communards with the butt-end, flinging about her like a devil.

Sérizier's lambs burst out laughing. They thought she was drunk. In those days, when the very atmosphere breathed cognac and absinthe, it was only natural that a woman should be drunk. They laughed, and left her, having done all there was to do here; left her grovelling on the ground by the lamp-post, alone with her dead, the warm May sun shining on her through the smoke of the battle, the air smelling of blood and burning.

While she hung over the prostrate figure, lying face downwards on the bloody dust, the rhythmical trot of the cavalry sounded in the distance, and the French troops were entering the Avenue d'Italie. Sérizier had retired into the prison when the carnage was over, and was occupied in revising a list of victims who were to be despatched with something more of formality than he had deemed necessary in the case of the Do-

minicans; but at the moment when he was about to order out the first prisoner upon his list, his lieutenant rushed in, and whispered in his ear.

All was over. The column of cavalry was seen advancing. The colonel of the 13th legion flung aside his papers, dashed into the avenue, threw himself into one of the houses communicating with the Avenue de Choisy, and disappeared.

When the French troops arrived they found nothing but mutilated corpses.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NIGHT WATCH OF DEATH.

FEARFUL was the night that followed that hideous day. Burning, burning, burning; burning and bloodshed everywhere. The battle had become a massacre, the conflagration a sea of fire. Never had been seen such destruction. The public granaries on the quay, the vast storehouses of Villette, eight hundred burning houses, and as many more newly set on fire, the D'Orsay barracks, the Tuileries, the Palais Royal, the Palace of the Legion of Honour, the Court of Archives, the Hôtel de Ville, theatres, manufactories, libraries, the Rue de Lille, the Rue du Bac, blazing and falling into ruin, made Paris seem one mighty brazier, through which wound the Seine, like a river of molten brass.

During the earlier part of the struggle the regular troops had obeyed the orders of their leaders with calm submission, doing their duty bravely in that worst of all combats—street warfare. But as the conflict went on, the sight of

those flaming ruins, the savagery of the insurgents, exasperated them, and it was no longer possible to restrain their fury. Their hearts were hardened by many a bitter memory of past sufferings—of wasted heroism, of captivity, sickness, hunger, long stages upon inhospitable roads, the shame of undeserved defeat—sufferings for which their sole recompense had been injury and insult. And these, who had fired the most glorious monuments of France, assassinated her bravest and best, what had *they* done during the war? They had drunk and swaggered, and held forth in wine-shops; they had strengthened the hands of the foe by their squabbles and revolts, and had garnered their strength for the work of bloodshed and universal destruction.

The soldiers, who had been accused of cowardice, who had been hooted as 'capitulards,' felt that in striking a terrible blow they were not only obeying the law, but avenging their country. The revolt had been pitiless; the punishment was untempered by mercy. The sanguinary laws which the Commune had promulgated recoiled upon herself. She, who had murdered her priests and soldiers; her justices and senators, perished in her turn by slaughter as merciless as her own.

All through that night of horror Philip Durand watched by the bedside of his wife and her new-

born infant in the Rue Gît le Cœur. The little street was safe in its obscurity, safe from the malice of the incendiaries, who had bigger game for their sport; but the conflagration was terribly near. All the sky was lurid with reflected fire, and the thunder of the cannonade and the rush and roar of the flames were heard in every gust of wind which blew this way, while every now and then came the sharp sudden sound of an explosion—another roof blown up, another wall falling.

The atmosphere was poisoned by the odours of petroleum, and the thick rank smoke from the Granaries of Abundance, where the stores of wine, oil, and dried fish fed the fierceness of the flames and intensified the stench of burning. Everywhere the work of destruction was being hurried on. The Commune was at the last gasp; these explosions and burnings were the death-rattle.

The little courtyard below Durand's windows was alive with people, going out and coming in, restless, anxious, alarmed, talking to each other in doorways or at open windows, bringing in the last news, which was as likely to be false as true.

Durand opened a window of the little *salon* softly, while Rose slept, and looked out.

"They are burning Notre Dame," said a man

in the court, seeing him at the window, and eager to impart his information. "They have piled barrels of petroleum all the length of the nave, half-way to the roof, and they are going to set it on fire. The grand old roof will fly into the air presently, like a pack of cards. It will be a sight worth seeing," he added, hurrying out as if to a play.

"St. Eustache is on fire," said another man, "and they are going to burn the Prefecture of Police. Rigault and his chums have been having a great supper there—seas of wine, mountains of provision—and now they know their day is over, and they are going to blow up the building."

Durand shut the window. A palace more or less, a church more or less! What did it matter amidst this universal ruin?—the Prussians at the door; the government weak, vacillating, the sport of circumstances; France in tatters, unable to save her bishops, her generals, her counsellors, her soldiers; given over as a prey to a sanguinary populace.

This strong clear-headed man sat down crushed by the weight of his country's desolation. He whose brain was usually quick to plan, cool to execute his plans, now felt powerless to look beyond the horror of the hour; but the ruin which overwhelmed him was not the destruction that

reigned without his dwelling. It was the blank within, that empty home up-stairs, which filled him with horror, which was ever in his mind as a haunting fear.

It was three days since Gaston had disappeared, and now Kathleen was gone. She had slipped out unseen by the porter or by any of the neighbours. She had vanished like a ghost at break of day. When he went up to her rooms this morning to carry her the last news of her sister, to cheer and comfort her, and buoy up her sinking hopes, as he had done all through the two previous days of her trouble, he found the nest deserted.

There was no doubt as to her flight, or its purpose. The inner room was locked, and the key taken away; the outer room was neatly swept and garnished; everything was in its place. Gaston's bureau was locked; the glazed cabinet in which he kept his cherished collection of books—not large, but so carefully chosen: chosen as poverty chooses its treasures, one by one, deliberately, anxiously—this, too, was locked, and every book on its shelf; and on the table lay a letter addressed to Durand:

"Dear Philip, dear Brother,—I am going to look for my husband. Have no fear for me.

Heaven will pity and protect my wretchedness. I shall be about all day and every day seeking for my beloved; but I shall come back here at night for shelter and rest, if possible. If I do not come back after dark you may know that my wanderings have taken me too far afield. But you need have no fear. Of one thing you may be sure—while my reason remains I will not destroy myself. I will be true to the teaching of my childhood, and God will give me grace to bear my troubles.

"Do not let one thought of me distract you from your duty of protecting Rose and her baby. If she asks about me, tell her that I am safe, in good hands, well cared for and protected. Is not that the truth, when I am in the keeping of the Holy Mother and her blessed angels?—Ever lovingly, your sister KATHLEEN."

It was midnight; the long dreary day was over, and she had not returned. Philip had crept up-stairs, and looked into the empty room several times in the course of the day; but there had been no sign of Kathleen's return. He had questioned the landlord, who kept the hall-door locked and bolted in this time of panic; but the man had seen nothing of Kathleen.

It had been altogether a trying day. Rose

was weak and somewhat feverish, and inquired anxiously every hour about Kathleen. Why did not her sister come to see her? Where was Gaston? Philip was sorely perplexed how to reply. Gaston was at the newspaper office, he faltered on one occasion.

"But the newspaper was suppressed six weeks ago," said Rose.

"Yes, but they are beginning again, now that times are better; and the Government will be restored. That's what makes Gaston so busy."

"But Kathleen—why does she desert me?"

"She is not very well, dear. It is only a cold; but it is better for her to keep her room."

"Yes, yes, let her nurse herself. O, I wish that I were well, and could go to her," said Rose, with a troubled look.

She was devoured by anxiety about Kathleen; and in spite of her husband's tenderness, in spite of fussy Maman Schubert's kindness, in spite even of that new and wonderful love, the maternal instinct, awakened in her mind by the infant that nestled at her side, like a bird under the parent wing, she could not overcome that feeling of fear and restlessness caused by her sister's absence.

"Are you sure that she is not seriously ill?" she asked Philip, looking at him with fever-bright

eyes. "It is so unlike Kathleen to make much of a slight illness. And she must know that I am pining for her."

"Shall I go and fetch her?" asked Philip, making a movement towards the door. "It is better for her health that she should stay in bed; but if you want her so badly—"

"No, no, not for the world. Give her my fondest love. Tell her to nurse herself. Give her baby's love, too, Philip: I know this little creature is all love, though he was born in an evil time."

"Poor little storm-bird!" murmured Philip, bending over the bed to kiss the little pink face, so soft, like something very sweet and lovable, but not quite human.

He was ashamed of himself for the lies he told so glibly. Yet he knew that it would be dangerous to tell his wife the truth—dangerous while her cheeks were flushed and her eyes glassy with fever. Maman Schubert had warned him that he must wade chin-deep in falsehood rather than allow his wife's mind to become troubled. He must do anything in the world to soothe and comfort her. La Schubert herself was glib and inventive, and her presence had always a soothing effect. She brought Rose imaginary messages from her sister; and pretended

to convey Rose's replies. She dandled the baby, and cooked Philip's dinner, and made the invalid's broth, all with the liveliest air, and made light of conflagration and ruin, although with every hour the roar of cannon, the hiss of mitrailleuse, grew louder, fort answering to fort with sullen thunder, the sound of musketry close at hand.

At midday a hideous noise resounded throughout the quarter. The houses rocked; fragments of plaster fell from the ceiling.

What was that? The explosion was too loud for any shell, however formidable. It was only the powder magazine at the Luxembourg, which had just been blown up. The Panthéon was expected momentarily.

And still Maman Schubert, with nods and friendly smiles, assured her dearest Madame Durand, "cette pauvre chérie," that the Versailles troops were carrying everything before them. The Commune was surrendering without a blow. Order would be restored, Paris at peace, by Sunday morning.

"And we shall hear all the church-bells ringing for mass, and see the people in their Sunday clothes," concluded Maman Schubert cheerily.

So the long day and the evening wore through,

and it was midnight, and there was no sign of Kathleen.

She whose return was so eagerly awaited in the Rue Gît le Cœur was not very far afield when the clocks chimed midnight. She had wandered about Paris all day, haunting the gates of the prisons, inquiring for her missing husband of every one who seemed in the least likely to be able to answer. Had there been any new arrests made within the last three days, and amongst the new arrests was there a young man, tall, slim, with dark-gray eyes and marked brows, handsome, a journalist? At the gates of Mazas, at the Great and the Little Roquette, at Sainte Pélagie, at La Santé, the patient pilgrim appeared, weary, with garments whitened by the chalky dust of the hard dry roads which scorched her tired feet, drooping in body, yet brave of soul, questioning, seeking, watching, imploring, but finding no trace of the lost one.

Night was falling before she turned away from the gates of La Santé, the model prison of Paris, where General Chanzy had been imprisoned for seven weary days at the beginning of the Commune—night had fallen as she walked slowly and wearily back to that part of the city which she knew best, where the Pont Neuf spans the

Seine, and the dark towers of Notre Dame stand out strong and stern against the sky-line. Night had come, but not darkness. The crescent moon shed her pale silvery light in the east, and the stars were golden in the deep calm azure of a cloudless sky. But all at once that azure vault grew dark, and the stars vanished. Gigantic clouds of black smoke mounted to the sky, and then descended earthward, covering the city with an impenetrable dome. Beneath this inky vault all was lurid. An awful light glared and glowed on the quays, on the bridges, in the broad space in front of the Hôtel de Ville. Left bank and right bank blazed and glared; here some stately public office, there a millionaire's mansion, sent up its tribute of flame to swell the funeral pyre of the doomed city. "Chassepot and torch, shoot and burn!" was the order of the night. Yonder in the Rue de Rivoli they were fighting desperately. Kathleen ran across the street amidst a rain of bullets, stumbling over scattered corpses, deafened by the roar of the cannonade. Slowly, despairingly, she wandered up and down those dreadful streets, perpetually in danger, yet passing scathless through every peril. Now and then a savage scowling face looked at her interrogatively, and then passed by. Sentinels questioned, and let her pass. There was no harm in her. She had

a distracted look—a pétroleuse who had proved of too weak a mind for that patriotic work, perhaps. Women are feeble creatures. This one's head had been turned. Only an inmate the more for the Maison des Fous.

Amidst blood and fire she wandered to and fro, pausing whenever there was a knot of idlers at a corner to listen to their talk, or repeat her old inquiries. Had there been any new arrests within the last three days?

Arrests? There were arrests every hour, a man told her. The gentlemen in power were getting rabid. Shoot and burn, that was the word. Murder and fire were their only notion for taking their revenge upon Versailles. Arrests, forsooth! What was the use of talking about arrests? The prisons were teeming with hostages, there was neither space nor provision for the herd of unfortunates; and now the word had gone forth to shoot them down in the prison-yards, or to roast them alive in their cells. Rigault and Ferré, Sérizier, Mégy, these were not men to surrender tamely. If these fiery stars were to be quenched, they would go down in a sea of blood.

"Anything new?" repeated a man in a group that stood on the bridge watching the burning of the Lyric Theatre, as if it had been a free re-

presentation, waiting for the Châtelet to take fire on the other side of the wide lurid street, momentarily expecting the dark towers of Notre Dame to vomit flames—"anything new? Yes, we live in stirring times. There is always something new. The Versaillais have taken the Panthéon, the stronghold of the Commune, just as the Federals were going to blow it up. Millière has been shot. That is new. Have you heard of the massacre of the Dominicans? That is new. And Sérizier has taken to his heels—Sérizier, the colonel of the 101st battalion; Sérizier, the hero of Issy and Chatillon. The colonel is gone, and the battalion is scattered."

The Dominicans! At that name Kathleen drew closer to the group, as near as she could to the speaker, gazing at him with wild wide-open eyes. The Dominicans! Almost the last words she had heard from her husband's lips were an indignant protest against the ill-treatment of these good monks.

"I would shed my last drop of blood rather than that a hair of Father Captier's head should be hurt by those devils," he had said a few minutes before he left the house.

She went close up to the man who had spoken, and who was now staring, open-mouthed, at the burning theatre. She laid her hand upon his arm.

"Is that true?" she asked. "Has there been any harm done to the Dominican Fathers of the school of Albert the Great? My husband was at school there, and he loves them as if they were his own flesh and blood."

"Your husband's sons will have to find another school, citoyenne," answered the man, with a cynical air. "The Dominican school is sacked, and the shaven-polls have been given their passport for paradise."

"Murdered!"

"Every one of them. Shot down like pheasants in a battue, this afternoon, yonder in the Avenue d'Italie," pointing far away to the south. "There is nothing left of the nest or of the magpies, citoyenne."

She clasped her hands before her face, and reeled against the parapet of the bridge. Nobody noticed her, or cared for her. The roof of the theatre was falling in—a shower of burning fragments was blown across the dark water like a fiery rain. On the other side of the river the glare, the smoke, the stench of burning were intensifying with every moment.

"Will there be anything left of Paris but dust and ashes when the sun rises?" asked one of the bystanders.

Kathleen leant against the bridge, motionless,

speechless, paralysed by fear. She tried to think. But for some moments thought was impossible; her brain was clouded, benumbed, frozen. Then came reflection. Gaston had said that he would die to save them, fight for them to the death, these good fathers; and they had all been murdered, and Gaston was missing. He who had given her such faithful love had abandoned her to desolation and despair.

Was it likely that he would so abandon her, unless a higher duty claimed him? Was it likely that he would leave her for a space of four days in ignorance of his fate, unless he were a prisoner —or unless he were dead? Paris reeked with blood, every street was the scene of murder, and he was gone from her—gone with the rest of those victims of whom the crowd spoke with such seeming lightness, while it looked on at the burning of the city as at the fireworks which conclude some grand fête.

They were waiting for the conflagration to burst from yonder mighty pile, from painted window, and tower and battlement, from nave and transept, from clerestory and roof: Notre Dame was to be the bouquet.

"Tell me, sir," said Kathleen, in a hoarse half-strangled voice, "was there any one else killed in the Avenue d'Italie—any one besides the Domini-

cans—any one who was in company with the good fathers?"

"Yes, there were a few understrappers, I believe, servants of the school."

"No one else?"

"What do I know? The news has passed from mouth to mouth. There is no official bulletin, citoyenne. The Commune keeps these things quiet. It is only hearsay."

Only hearsay! A ray of hope lit up the blackness of her soul. Only hearsay! And how many wild stories had been told in Paris within the last week, how many horrors had been bruited about which had been but bubbles of foul imagining! The story of the bodies found in the church of Saint-Laurent, for instance. The desecrated corpses exposed at the church-door, the supposed victims of priestly crime; foul fictions invented to stimulate the populace to carnage and spoliation.

"Is it far to the Avenue d'Italie?" she asked.

The bystanders answered carelessly, one saying one thing, one another, each and all absorbed in the awful rapture of the scene, and caring not at all for individual needs and feelings.

One o'clock struck from the clock-tower of Notre Dame. Kathleen was footsore, faint, her eyes burning with fever, her mouth parched with thirst. She looked down at the river, but the

stream seemed to be running with liquid fire, not water. There was no fountain near. She must get on somehow, without the longed-for refreshment of a cup of cold water. There was no use in asking for information here, where the news was only hearsay, where people answered her carelessly. In the Avenue d'Italie, on the scene of this hideous crime, if the thing were true, she must more easily learn the actual facts—who had fallen, how many. There she might learn the worst.

She crossed to the left bank of the river, and began her pilgrimage of despair. The distance was long, every step was weariness and pain after her day's wanderings. All the length of the Boulevard St. Michel, along which the ambulance-wagons were passing in dismal procession, crimson with blood. Under their scanty covering were heaped a confused mass of corpses. The dead were being carried away by wagon-loads. On and on, past a barricade at which the men of the quarter were working, old gray-headed men among them, men who only wanted to die peacefully at home with wife and children, and who, knowing that death was inevitable, stuck heroically to their posts. On and on, till the blaze of the conflagration, the roar of the flames, seemed to be left behind. But not the dull thunder of the cannonade,

the sharp crack of pistol-shots. Carnage was audible on every side.

Blood everywhere—the pavement was stained with it; the doors and door-posts were splashed with it; the gutters ran with it. Refuse of all kinds littered the road; butt-ends of muskets, fragments of belts, tails of coats, strips of blouses, caps, cartouch-boxes, shoes; and here, on the open space in front of a barricade, the soldiers who had eaten their soup had lain calmly down to sleep by the side of the slain, the living mingled with the dead. Kathleen looked at the sleepers shudderingly in the cold clear moonlight. The clouds had drifted away, and that scene of carnage was steeped in silvery light. Impossible to pass that spot with feet undyed in blood, impossible to avoid seeing those dead faces. There, with arms thrown wide apart and face turned to the sky, calm, proud even in death, lies the young lieutenant of artillery whom Kathleen remembered to have seen in the early morning, sitting astride a cannon, thoughtful, with arms folded, and a face prophetic of doom. Yes, it is he and no other. His vest is open, as he flung it apart when the victors called upon him to surrender. His heart is one wide bloody wound. All the gladness and pride of youth have welled out in that purple stream.

No lack of traffic upon the boulevard or in the street, albeit the night is far advanced towards morning. The omnibuses are going again—those useful omnibuses, the luxury of the poor—but their fares are not the living, but the dead. They carry a ghastly load of blood-stained corpses piled at random, thrust in helter-skelter. There are not vehicles enough for this dismal traffic. Railway-wagons, breaks, all are pressed into the funeral service. Men with sleeves turned up collect the dead, the hideous train moving slowly from barricade to barricade.

One man stands looking with horror at his naked arms, steeped up to the shoulders in blood. "Are there no fountains hereabouts?" he asks of the crowd. Yes, fountains, rivers of water are needed to purify this Paris, drowned in the blood of her children.

It is deep in the night, but the stillness of night is not here. Men, women, families are grouped in the doorways. No one knows where the conflagration will end, how near the carnage may come; no man knows if he and his dear ones will see the daylight above the roofs and steeples of eastern Paris. Heavily, drearily the wagons go by with their silent burden. This may be called the night-watch of the slain. On the Boulevard d'Italie the insurgents have erected a monster re-

doubt, a fortification in triple stages, with trenches, loopholes, tunnels, defended at first by five hundred men. The defenders have dwindled to five, but these five will not yield. Their fortress is bombarded, the adjoining houses are in flames; but still the five refuse to surrender, and after a deadly fight, that has lasted thirty-nine hours, they are taken and shot by the Versaillais.

Such conflicts, as bloody as resolute, have been enacted all over Paris in the day that is not yet old. And now the moonlit hours, the calm of night, are given to the gathering up of the dead. Victors and vanquished lie cheek by jowl on the stones of Paris; hecatombs sacrificed to discord and civil war. The red flag flies yet here and there above the carnage, the bloody ensign of a bloody reign.

CHAPTER X.

WIDOWED.

It is morning, dim early morning, dawn pink and pearl-coloured above the housetops, an odour of verdure, of lilacs, and acacias in the fresh sweet air; and Kathleen wanders up and down the Avenue d'Italie, always coming back to that house which has been used as a prison by Citizen

Sérizier, Colonel Sérizier, the leader of the 101st battalion. From one and from another, from many informants who all seem to tell their story differently, she has gathered the history of the massacre. She has heard how those harmless Dominican Fathers were hunted down, slaughtered like sheep in the shambles. It is after much questioning that she hears from a woman in one of the houses opposite the prison that there was another victim, one who was neither Dominican nor subordinate of the Dominican school—a young man, handsome, with dark hair and eyes. He would have escaped in the *mêlée*, only he lost time in trying to save Father Captier, the Prior; and it was only when the Prior had fallen, when the fathers had been shot down all along the street, that this noble youth had turned to fly. And then, like a young antelope, he rushed through the savage crowd. He would have got off even then, perhaps, if it had not been for a pétroleuse, a veritable she-devil, who gave the view-halloa, and rushed after him with half a dozen ruffians. He fell at the corner of a side street—that new street to the left yonder—the woman thought.

Kathleen listened to the woman's story, questioning her closely at every stage. She was so calm in her white despair, she listened and pondered the details of the tragedy with such a

tranquil air that one could have hardly guessed that each word was a death-blow.

"Do you recognise this young man as any one belonging to you?" asked the woman compassionately.

She was a sempstress, who cared neither for Peter nor Paul, a decent person who had descended from her attic in the roof to see what this new dawn was bringing to Paris—deliverance or death. She was not one of those furies who had stood at their windows shrieking and applauding during the butchery.

"I believe he was my husband."

"Heavens, that is sad!"

"Whose fault was it? Whose work, the massacre? Can you tell me that?"

"They say hereabouts that it was Sérizier, Colonel Sérizier. He was at the head of it all. He ordered the Dominicans and the others to be brought here; he ordered them to be shot; he was there, in the midst of the massacre, directing his men, encouraging those vile women who were even more savage than the Federals; his own hand fired upon those helpless priests; he mocked them with abusive epithets; he was pitiless, devilish, murder incarnate. You look ready to sink with fatigue," said the sempstress, moved with pity for Kathleen, whose eyes were fixed and glassy as the

eyes of death; "come up to my room and rest; it is a poor place, but you are welcome. And I can give you a cup of coffee and a bit of bread; it is not so bad as in the siege."

"Not so bad? the streets were not drowned in blood then," said Kathleen. "No, you are very good, but I am not tired," with a ghastly smile. "I will go and look at the corner where he fell. Stay, what did they do with the bodies?"

"The Versaillais came an hour after and carried them all away."

"Where—where?" gasped Kathleen.

But the woman could not tell her. Among so many wagon-loads of dead, who could tell, who cared, whither one particular batch had been taken? Perhaps they had all been carried to that gaping chasm behind the chapel at Père Lachaise, into which the Federal corpses were flung *en masse* after the battle of Asnières. The sempstress had seen that common grave, sixty corpses waiting for recognition, a sight to freeze one's blood.

Kathleen left her, and walked wearily to that side street, a narrow shabby street: doors and windows were all closed, most of the houses had an evil aspect. There was no one standing about whom she could question.

A few paces from the corner of the street, at the foot of a lamp-post, she saw the spot where

the victim had fallen. A pool of blood had stained the summer dust. It was dry now, but she could see how the corpse had lain in blood and mire. The figure had printed its outline on the ground. There was no other trace of the massacre about. One victim, and one only, had fallen here.

She knelt beside that awful stain; she watered it with her passionate tears, the first she had shed throughout her pilgrimage of two-and-twenty hours. The church clocks were striking four. Yesterday morning at six she had left the Rue Gît le Cœur. And now she had come to the end of her journey; she had found her resting-place. She knelt alone, unnoticed, with her hands clasped over her face, praying, first for her beloved, for the repose of his soul; then followed a prayer less pure, less Christian, for revenge upon his murderer, the destroyer of her happiness.

Who was his murderer? Not the blind mad mob, not even the devilish woman, the pétroleuse, lashed into crime and murder by the scourges of insurgent tyrants. Sérizier, the man in authority, the wretch who brought those good fathers from their peaceful seclusion to the gaol and the shambles. It was Sérizier of whom she thought when she prayed for vengeance.

"Let it come, O Lord; long or late, let Thy

thunder come and strike him as he struck them! Let Thine hour of vengeance be sure and swift! Lo here, looking up to Thee, I swear never to know rest or respite till I have tracked him to his doom!"

Sérizier, colonel of the 101st battalion. She wanted to know more about him—whither he had vanished after the carnage; in what cellar or what garret this craven hound had hidden himself.

When she had exhausted her passion in prayer, she calmed herself and began to think.

She was tired to the point of being fain to cast herself down upon the dusty road, and to lie there till sleep or death came to give her rest from the fever of her brain and the dull aching of her bones. But she struggled heroically against this overpowering lassitude, and went back to the boulevard, and hobbled on till she came to a workman's café that opened early for the accommodation of the neighbourhood. Here she entered, and seated herself at a table near the door. The fresh morning air blew in upon her face as she sat there, and she felt as if that alone kept her from fainting. Never in all her life before had she entered such a place alone, or sat alone among such company. Her girlhood and brief married life had been as closely guarded as if she had been a duchess. To sit alone among

rough blouses and Versaillais soldiers in their stained uniforms was a new experience.

She ordered some coffee, and the waiter brought her a roll and butter. She had eaten nothing except one piece of bread since she had left home. The coffee and the food revived her, and she was able to look about her, and listen to the eager voices of the blouses and soldiers, as they sat eating and talking, smoking, drinking all at once, as it seemed to her, with their elbows on the table, seen indistinctly in a cloud of tobacco.

"*Hé, le père*, two little glasses of cognac, one of absinthe," called a blouse.

"*Garçon, une gomme*," drawled another blouse, with sublime affectation, imitating the expired, or temporarily obliterated, race of foplings, the *petits crevés* of the Empire, known afterwards as *gommeux*, elegant consumers of absinthe considerably diluted with gum arabic. And then came a name which riveted Kathleen's attention to the next table. The name was Sérizier. They were discussing the delegate of the 13th arrondissement, the commander of the 101st battalion.

"They say that he has decamped, this good Sérizier, the hero of our battles," said one of the men.

"It was time," answered a soldier; "our cavalry were at the end of the street when *cette bête* took

to his heels. They have been hunting for him ever since, but the rat has run into some hole where he is not easily found. We shall have him, though. *Nom d'un chien*, such butchers must not be allowed to escape. Those good Dominican Fathers! No, the *canaille* shall not get off!"

"He is a man of yesterday, this Sérizier, a creation of the 18th March, is he not?" asked the other.

"He is Communard, *crapule* among the Communards. He is a currier by trade, but he got into trouble under the Empire, and was a refugee in Belgium up to the 4th of September. He hates all priests with a diabolical ferocity, and has prided himself upon desecrating the churches by his brutal orgies. He is more tiger than man; but we shall cut his claws and draw his teeth when we find him."

"When we find him, yes!" answered the other, lolling over the table, and eating his soup with an air of luxurious repose.

His hands and face were alike blackened by gunpowder; his hair was clotted with dust and blood. There had been no leisure yet for the victors to make their toilet.

"You think he has taken the key of the fields?"

"I should say he was across the frontier by

this time, or on board one of the American steamers at Havre. He would not let the grass grow under his feet."

"Not so easy to get out of Paris, my friend. Look at Raoul Rigault. He tried to hide himself yesterday afternoon, but they unearthed him, and set him with his back to the wall—his favourite attitude for other people. And this Sérizier is a marked man. He commanded twelve battalions at Chatillon and at Issy. All the army know him. He will never be able to pass our outposts unrecognised."

"I hope not," answered the other. "They say that some of the Communist dogs—the leaders of the sheep—have provided themselves with balloons, and that, as soon as they have burned Paris, they mean to set sail for England or Belgium."

There was no more said about Sérizier, and Kathleen left, after paying for her refreshment, and walked homeward slowly, feebly, in the bright cool morning. The sun was rising over the heights beyond Paris. It was shining on the faces of the dead, on the dreadful crimson dye which stained the streets, on rags and tatters, and fragments of arms strewed thicker than autumn leaves on roadway and pavement.

Some of the street-lamps were still burning—

a pale and sickly light in the glow and glory of the morning. The barricades were deserted. This side of Paris was in possession of the regular army, and a comparative quiet reigned—the quiet of death and desolation. But mighty masses of flame and smoke yonder, as of a burning volcano, told that the conflagration still raged with unabated fury—the Rue du Bac, the Rue de Lille, the public granaries, the Palace of Justice: enough material there to last for a few good hours yet.

Half-way towards the Rue Gît le Cœur, Kathleen met a melancholy procession. Forty Communards, men and women, prisoners, in chains, silent with bent heads, in the midst of the soldiers who are leading them to the place where they are to be shot. No trial—no formula of any kind. They have been taken red-handed among the ruins they have made, in ditches, behind heaps of stones. They have been forced to fight, no doubt. The Commune would take no excuse. Her children must give her their hearts' blood. To refuse was treason; and death to all traitors was the cry of those last days. Rebellion, in her death-agony, was merciless. "As good one death as another," said the sheep, as they went to the barricades; and they worked and drank—they were passing liberal with their strong drinks, these Communard leaders—and they fought with the

desperate courage of men who knew that death was certain either way.

And now, meekly as they obeyed their leaders, they suffer themselves to be led to their doom. Not theirs the brains that hatched rebellion; not theirs the pockets that were filled by pillage and theft; not theirs the profligate orgie or the brief spell of power; but theirs the penalty—death.

It was nine o'clock when Kathleen toiled slowly up the staircase, and knocked with tremulous hand at her sister's door. That last portion of her pilgrimage had been the slowest of all. She had crawled along, half asleep, hardly knowing where she was or what she was doing. She had stumbled against the passers-by, and had been accused of drunkeness more than once by an enraged citizen. And now, as Maman Schubert opened the door, she fell into her arms, and sank from that matronly bosom to the floor in a dead faint.

The door of the inner room—Rose's bedroom—was ajar. The good Schubert lifted up Kathleen's lifeless form and laid it on the sofa. She ministered to her with the skilfulness of an experienced nurse, and then ran to close the door of communication, lest Rose should hear too much. Already Rose had inquired several times for her sister. Was Kathleen better? Would she be well enough

to come down to see Rose and the baby? The mother had an idea that Kathleen would find the little one grown. He seemed to develop so quickly. He was all perfume and bloom, like an opening flower. His breath was sweeter than summer roses.

Durand was lying down on a mattress spread upon the floor of the tiny kitchen. He had taken his turn at the barricade last night, and had received a bullet in the fleshy part of his arm. He was feverish with the pain of his wound, devoured by perpetual thirst.

"You good soul, what would become of us without you?" he said, as he took a glass of water from Maman Schubert's hand. "How shall we ever repay you?"

"My friend, do you think I need any payment? What has a lonely old woman with a small annuity to do in this world except care for her neighbours? And Rose and Kathleen are to me as my own daughters. Did I not see them when they first entered Paris, footsore and dusty, but so gentle and so pretty in their weariness? Was I not the first to welcome them to this great city, which is now the city of death? Heaven help us! Lie still, and keep your mind tranquil, my friend, and as soon as I have given baby his bath—how he loves the water, the dear innocent!

—I will come and put a fresh dressing on that poor arm."

Madame Schubert was surgeon, nurse, intermediary between the sick-room and the outer world—everything to the Durand household in their affliction.

From his bed in the kitchen Philip heard Kathleen's return—her feeble voice presently talking in low murmurs with Madame Schubert. She was safe; she had returned. Through fire and smoke and carnage she had passed unharmed. Here, at least, was a blessed relief—one burden lifted from their weary hearts. But he, the husband? What of him?

Kathleen told Madame Schubert the story of her pilgrimage; told how she had knelt upon the bloodstained ground where her husband's corpse had lain. But the good Schubert refused to be convinced, would not see any sufficient evidence of Gaston's death. What did it come to after all, this story which Kathleen had heard in the Avenue d'Italie? A young man, nameless, with dark hair and eyes, had been killed with the good fathers. But why should that young man be Gaston Mortemar?

"There are enough young men in France, my faith, with dark hair and eyes! *Ça ne manque pas*," said Madame Schubert.

"Has my husband come home?" asked Kathleen.

The good Schubert shrugged her shoulders and shook her head despondingly.

"Alas, no!"

"Then he is dead—no matter how or where. He is dead! Do you think that if he were living he would forsake me?" asked Kathleen.

"He may be a prisoner."

"Would to God it were so! But I know; there is something here," touching her breast, "something stronger than myself, that tells me he fell yesterday—on that spot."

"Kathleen," called a voice from behind the closed door, "Kathleen!"

Rose had heard those murmurs in the next room, and had recognised Kathleen's voice.

Madame Schubert grasped Kathleen's arm as she was going to answer that call.

"Don't go to her yet," she said. "You will frighten her with your ghastly face and your dust-stained gown. She was very ill yesterday, weak and feverish. She is weak to-day, but the fever is better. She must not be agitated in any way. Go to your room, and wash and change your clothes, and come down presently looking bright and happy."

"It will be easy," said Kathleen, with a ghastly smile. "Yes, I understand."

"And not a word about Gaston or your wanderings. We told her nothing but lies yesterday —told her that you were in your own bed, ill with a cold. Don't undeceive her. She is so happy, poor soul, nursing her first baby. Yet, even in the midst of her new happiness, she was full of anxiety about you."

"I will be careful," said Kathleen. "I think I am getting used to sorrow. I ought to be able to hide it."

She obeyed Madame Schubert in every particular, and came back in less than an hour, fresh and bright in her clean cotton gown and black silk apron, her lovely hair brushed to silky softness, and coiled in a smooth chignon at the back of her head. She smiled as she kissed Rose. She sat beside the bed and rocked the baby on her knees, and talked to him, and cooed at him, trying to awaken some faint ray of intelligence in the little pink face, which seemed to the mother to be full of soul.

"Do you think he has grown?" asked Rose fondly.

"I think he is wonderfully improved since the day before yesterday," answered Kathleen.

"Improved!" Rose felt inclined to resent the

word. Could there be room for improvement in a being so perfect as that child had been from the very first hour of his life? But Kathleen had vague memories of an unlovely redness and spottiness in the infant's earliest idea of a complexion, and the soft rosy tints of to-day seemed to her a marked advance in baby's development.

Rose lay with her face turned towards her sister, her hand in Kathleen's hand, perfectly happy. Happy in the fulness of her love, albeit fort still answered fort with sullen thunder, and cannon and mitrailleuse, chassepot and revolver, still made deadly music in the streets. There was peace here for Rose Durand in the narrow circle of home. She had suffered all anxieties about the outside world to be lulled to rest by Madame Schubert's cheerful assurances. And then, since the birth of the Commune, Paris had grown accustomed to the sound of bombardment, to the smoke of cannon. Polichinelle had made his jokes, the merry-go-rounds had revolved, the barrel-organs and fifes and drums had sounded cheerily in the Champs Elysées, albeit Versailles was bombarding Paris. The roar of guns, the noise and havoc of war, had become the every-day sounds of the city. Rose, lying in her curtained bed, windows closed and muffled, hardly knew that the guns to-day sounded louder and nearer.

"Philip will go no more to the barricades," she told Kathleen. "He was wounded in the shoulder yesterday—a very slight wound, praise to Heaven! but enough to prevent his fighting any more."

Kathleen heard with a shudder, remembering that file of prisoners, with fettered limbs and downcast eyes pale, despairing, submissive. She had heard people say that all who had carried arms against the Republic would be served thus. "*Passés pas les armes!*" The phrase was familiar enough now. A short shrift, and your back against a wall, citizen, your waistcoat open, so! and eight muzzles pointed at your heart.

"Where is Gaston?" said Rose presently. "Maman Schubert said he was at the office all yesterday. His newspaper is to be revived now that Paris is more tranquil, she told me. Are you glad of that, Kathleen? I hope he will not preach revolution any more. We have had enough of the Commune."

"Yes, enough—more than enough," said Kathleen, her pale lips quivering as she turned away her head.

All that day the sisters spent together, Kathleen devoting herself to Rose and the baby, smiling upon both, speaking hopeful words; but after dark, when Rose had fallen asleep, Kathleen stole

away from the sick room just as Madame Schubert reëntered, after having attended to her own home affairs. Before Madame Schubert had time to ask her a question, Kathleen was gone. She ran up to her own room, put on her neat little bonnet and shawl, her thick black veil, and then back to those terrible streets, to the stifling smoke, the glare of the conflagration, the tramp of soldiery, the cry of "Stand, or I fire!"

The struggle was over in the centre of Paris. The insurgents had retired to Père Lachaise, Ménilmontant, Belleville, the Buttes Chaumont. The huge storehouses of Villette filled half the sky with lurid flame, across which flashed the swift white light of the cannon. The Hôtel de Ville stood sharply out against the sky of flame and moonlight—a ruin, grand as any wreck of Roman greatness; airy columns, fairy arches, doorways without rooms, spectral corridors, cornices of delicate tracery; and, above all, unharmed, in big golden capitals, the legend, "Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!"

And still roars the demoniac thunder of the cannon. Montmartre, from its superior height, rains death and destruction upon Belleville and La Roquette. Belleville and La Roquette reply with mitrailleuse and shell.

"Any news—any news of Colonel Sérizier?"

Kathleen asks of a group of women at a street-corner.

But they do not even know who Sérizier is. They are full of their own troubles, their own fears. One of these weeps for a husband whom she has not seen for four days: called out against his will—he, the peaceable father of a family—to go and work and fight and die at the barricades.

"Ah, *ma bonne!*" she says to Kathleen, with streaming eyes, "the Commune was very cruel; and now they say Monsieur Thiers will be cruel too. Those foolish people have pulled down his house, and that will not help to arrange matters."

Sérizier? No; no one in the streets knew anything about Sérizier.

What was this dark rumour which the loiterers in the streets repeated to each other with awe-stricken faces? The hostages had been murdered at La Roquette three days ago, slaughtered within the walls of the prison. The Archbishop of Paris, the Curé of the Madeleine, Monsieur Bonjean the President—eighteen victims in all.

Yes, it was true. True also that at five o'clock this afternoon, in the bright May sunshine, another band of hostages—priests, soldiers, civilians—to the number of fifty-two, had been done to

death by a savage mob in the Rue Haxo, on the heights of Belleville; but this new horror had not yet become town talk.

It was one o'clock in the morning when Kathleen went home, worn out by wandering up and down the streets, standing at corners or on the bridges listening to the passers-by, to the people who stood at their doors; but nowhere could she hear anything which threw new light upon the tragedy in the Avenue d'Italie, or the wretch who had planned that bloody deed.

CHAPTER XI.

KATHLEEN'S AVOCATION.

WHIT SUNDAY. May on the threshold of June, the very dawn of summer; but the sun, which hitherto has shone with pitiless searching light upon scenes of death and horror, shines no more. Stormy winds beat and bluster against that feeble old house in the Rue Gît le Cœur, with a sound and fury as of thunder: the cannonade of heaven takes up the cannonade of earth, and echoes it with twenty-fold power. Tempestuous rain lashes the windows, like the spray from a seething ocean. The cannon of Montmartre thunders against the heights of Belleville and Ménilmontant. The in-

surgents reply with savage fury, blind, reckless, deluging Paris with shells.

And while the pitiless struggle still goes on upon the heights of Belleville, the day of reprisals has already begun for the insurgents. From Mazas they bring a hundred and forty-eight prisoners, hastily huddled into the prison yesterday. In the stormy Sunday morning, Whitsuntide morning, they are marched to the cemetery of Père Lachaise, among the trees and the flowers, and the marble monuments of the distinguished dead: and there, hard by that common grave where the murdered Archbishop and his companions lie in their bloody shrouds, the Federal prisoners are divided into batches of ten, and shot to death. They die bravely, joining hands and crying, "Long live the Commune!" with their last breath.

In the prison of Little Roquette, at about the same hour, two hundred and twenty-seven insurgents meet the same doom; not quite so boldly, for some of these, said an eye-witness, were snivellers, and begged for mercy.

The final hour has come; those shells are verily the death-rattle of the Commune. Thirty thousand men are said to be concentrated upon this point of Paris, where they have built up giant barricades, almost impenetrable fortresses, com-

municating with each other by underground passages, a wonder of rough and ready masonry and skill. They are held in this supreme hour by men of desperate courage, men who have sworn not to surrender.

Two o'clock on that stormy Sabbath; and so far there has been neither rest nor respite. Cannon, mitrailleuse, chassepot, thundering, rattling, roaring, hissing; but now as the afternoon wears on there come intervals of silence. The cannonade pauses to draw breath. The sounds of battle seem more remote—they die away in the distance. Then silence.

Silence! Are they all dead?

This is Sunday, the day when the labourer rests from his toil; but to-day there has been only one labourer, and his name is Death.

Evening, and for the first time for many weeks and many days no more cannon. O happy silence, silence of peace! Or should we not rather say silence of death?

A column of six thousand prisoners who have surrendered at Belleville slowly defile along the boulevard: and this is verily the end. Yes, the cup of desolation has been drained to the dregs. There have been the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy, as in

the day of the Prophet; only the dogs have been human dogs, and the beasts have been human beasts; and the whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind, and it has fallen with pain upon the head of the wicked: and on the head of the good and just, and innocent and gentle also.

The sacred month of May, month dedicated to the holy mother of God, was over—month of May never to be forgotten by the French people, May which has left its indelible mark upon the city of Paris—and now all the gates of the city were opened, and the world came to see the work of destruction. English, Americans, foreigners of all kinds went about looking at the ruins, as at Pompeii or Herculaneum, criticising, examining, somewhat disappointed that the havoc was not more universal.

On the 7th of June came the funeral procession of Monsignor Darboy, the third Archbishop of Paris murdered within a quarter of a century. Under a gray and sunless sky the car with its long train of mourners, soldiers, people, solemnly, silently defiled along the quays, past the still smouldering ruins of palaces and mansions. No roll of drums, no funeral music broke that awful

silence; only the rhythmical tread of the soldiers, the hollow rumble of gun-carriages. In the dumbness of a broken-hearted city, a city reeking with blood newly shed, the martyr was carried to his tomb in the great cathedral—last stage of a journey that had known so many dismal halting places—from prison to prison, and then to the common grave at Père Lachaise, from there to the bed of state in the archiepiscopal palace, and now to the final resting-place among the historic dead.

In the Rue Gît le Cœur life had resumed its wonted way, save for one empty place. Rose was again astir, the careful manager, the attentive wife, nursing her baby, busy with her domestic work, cleaning, cooking, keeping the little apartment as neat and bright as a palace. There were flowers on the window-sill again, a bunch of flowers on the table at which Philip wrote or read, a bouquet of lilies of the valley, pure, spotless, telling no tale of a ruined city, a humiliated and impoverished nation. Within, by the domestic hearth, all was peace. Philip's arm was slowly mending. He was able even to work a little at the famous carved sideboard in his workshop, or to bring one of the panels into his wife's sitting-room, to sit there by the open window, chiselling a group of fruit, bird or fish, and whistling softly to himself as he

worked, while Rose sat in her rocking chair crooning to her sleeping babe.

And Kathleen, the widowed, the heart-broken, what was her life in these days of restored peace? She was very quiet. She bore her sorrow with a silent resignation which was more pathetic than loud wailings or passionate tears. But Rose would have liked better to see her weep more. That bloodless face, those fixed and hollow eyes, that slow and heavy step—the step which had once been so light and swift upon the stair—those long intervals of silence and apathy, were not these the indications of a broken heart?

Rose Durand did all in her power to comfort the mourner. She tried to persuade her sister to surrender the apartment on the upper story, and to occupy a little room off Philip's workshop: a mere closet; but Rose could furnish it, and make it a pretty nest for her darling; and then Kathleen would be her child again, always under her watchful care. She would share all their meals, live with them altogether; and the company of the little one, who showed himself full of intelligence, would soothe and amuse her.

"You are very good, dear," answered Kathleen meekly, when this scheme was pressed upon her; "you and Philip have been all goodness to me. But I like to live alone, just now. I am not fit

company for any one. And again, if—if—" with a profound sigh, "if—he should come back, and find his rooms altered, his books disturbed—it would seem as if I had not really loved him."

Rose was silent. Till this moment she had supposed that Kathleen was absolutely convinced of her husband's death, that the black gown she wore was the sign of hopeless widowhood; but these words told of a lingering hope, and after this Rose no longer urged her sister to give up the apartment. It was better she should go on hoping until the thin thread of hope wore out, than that she should sink all at once into the gulf of an absolute despair. Better, too, that she should have the daily occupation of arranging her rooms, dusting Gaston's books, opening a volume now and then and looking at a page, as if it held his own words. There were pages of Musset's poetry which seemed to speak to her with her husband's voice, so often had he read the lines to her in their brief married life. She knew all his books, and knew the measure of his love for each.

Every morning she put a little bunch of flowers on his writing-table by the window. And yet in her heart of hearts she was convinced that he was dead, and that it was his blood she had seen staining the dusty ground in the street off the

Avenue d'Italie. And then when this work of dusting, polishing, and arranging everything was done, work over which she lingered lovingly, she would put on her little black bonnet, with a thick crape veil over her face, and go out and wander about the streets and the quays, and loiter on the bridges, hearing all that could be heard of the public news. People respected that black gown and bonnet, and the thick mourning veil. She was recognised as one of the many mourners who had been left behind after that awful tide of blood and fire had rolled over Paris. Lonely as she was, young, beautiful, no one molested her. She went from place to place, secure in the majesty of her desolation.

She saw the long files of insurgent prisoners led along the streets, fastened together by their elbows, with lowered heads, still fierce and shuddering from the bloody battle, guarded by a *cordon* of soldiers. She saw the exasperated crowd flinging itself savagely upon these victims of their leaders' folly, trying to break through the *cordon* of soldiers, the women more furious than the men, striking at the prisoners with their umbrellas, crying, "Death to the assassins! To the fire with the incendiaries!"

When some poor panting wretch, exhausted by fatigue, tottered and fell, and was picked up

by the gendarmes and put in one of the vehicles of relief which followed the convoy, there was a howl of fury from the mob:

"No, no," they cried, "shoot him on the spot!"

And as the dismal train passed through the villages, on the quiet country roads, there was the same chorus of insults and execrations, a torture that knew no cessation till the prisoners reached the camp at Satory, where they had the naked earth for their bed, and the sky for their shelter. Perhaps some among these pilgrims of the chain may have assisted in that other procession on the 27th of May, when Emile Gois and his myrmidons drove the priests and the gendarmes to the place of butchery in the Rue Haxo.

The day of reprisals had come, and the day was bitter. And the cry of Paris is like the voice of the daughter of Zion that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, "Woe is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murderers!"

In all her wanderings, those loiterings under the limes and the maples, on the boulevard, or on a bench in the Champs Elysées, where the old air of gaiety began once more to enliven the scene, Kathleen had as yet heard nothing of the

missing Sérizier. The people whom she questioned were either densely ignorant—they had never heard of the man—or they remembered him vaguely as one of those heroes of the hour, a shoddy Achilles, who had strutted in a gaudy uniform and played the soldier in a passing show; or they were indifferent, shrugged their shoulders, believed that Sérizier had been killed on one of the barricades at Belleville yonder, or that he had been shot at Mazas with a gang of insurgents.

At last, however, one tender June evening, when the storied windows of Notre Dame flung broken coloured lights, like scattered jewels, upon the placid bosom of the Seine, hard by the Morgue, which lay low in the shadow yonder, like the black hull of some slave-ship, Kathleen, standing by the low parapet, listening to the deep-toned harmonies of the distant organ, heard two men talking of Sérizier.

They had known him evidently; he had been one of their intimates at some period of his career; but they were not talking of him with any warmth of friendship. The man had been too great a brute to conciliate even his own class.

"He got off, sure enough," said one. "He

was cleverer than Théophile Ferré, or Raoul Rigault, or Mégy, and the rest of them. I met him after dark, on the 25th of May, in the Place Jeanne d'Arc. He was in a fever of fright, poor wretch, shaking from head to foot with agitation and excitement. After all, there is a difference in killing and being killed, and Sérizier thought his turn had come. His boots and trousers were red with the blood of the Dominicans, and he complained of having to wear a uniform that was likely to betray his identity. He was colonel of the 101st battalion, you may remember, and had been very proud of his uniform—bulldog that he was. Well, he had never done *me* any good turn that I could remember; but one is glad to hide a hunted beast when the hounds are close upon him; so I told him I had a married sister living in the Rue Château des Rentiers, and that I could get him shelter in her lodging, which was on the ground-floor, at the back, looking into a walled yard—a safe kennel for any dog to hide in. He jumped at the offer, and I took him to my sister's place, gave him a supper, and a bit of carpet to lie upon, and a blouse and a pair of linen trousers in exchange for his fine feathers, and lent him a razor to cut off his military moustache; and at break of day he left us, clean-shaved and dressed like a workman."

"And you conclude that he got out of Paris that morning?" asked the other man.

"He was a fool if he did not, having a fair chance."

"The question is whether he had a chance. That bulldog muzzle of his would not be easily forgotten, and the Government was hard on his track on account of the slaughter of the Dominicans, which really was a little too much; even we of the International thought he had gone too far. I should think it would be easier for him to hide in Paris than to leave Paris just then."

"Perhaps; but there has been plenty of time since for him to get clear off. I daresay he is living by his craft as a currier in one of the big provincial towns. He would have to live by his trade; for I know he carried no money with him when he made off that morning."

"A currier! Here was something gained, at least," Kathleen thought. Until this moment she had not known the orignal avocation of the warrior Sérizier, commandant of the famous 101st, the hero of Issy and Chatillon. A currier! Here was a falling off indeed for the Ajax of the gutter!

One of the big provincial towns! Alas, this was indeed a vague clue. Rouen, Havre, Lyons, Tours, Rennes—the names of a dozen great cities

came into Kathleen's mind as she went slowly homeward, downcast and disheartened. He lived; that was something for her to know. He lived to expiate his crime, to suffer as she suffered, to render blood for blood. Her life, her brain, her heart should be devoted to the task of finding him; her hand should point him out to the law he had outraged.

All that night—the soft summer night, full of the murmuring of leaves—even here in desolated Paris, where the ruined houses stood up blank and black, with shattered windows, through which the moonlight shone and the June winds blew; a handful of dust, a fragment of crumbling mortar, falling every now and then as the zephyrs touched the broken walls—all that night Kathleen lay broad awake, staring at the casement opposite her bed; and when day dawned—the sweet summer dawn that came so soon—she sprang up, and began to wash and dress. Her plan was formed.

One of those two men had said there was safer hiding for such as Sérizier in Paris than outside Paris; the other had said that he had no money upon him at the time of his supposed flight. Without money how could he have taken a long journey, unless he had walked, like the two sisters? But the colonel of the 101st—the man who had wallowed in feasting and drunken-

ness, who had held his impious orgies in the violated churches of Paris — was doubtless too luxurious a person to tramp for weary leagues along the white dusty roads, under the pitiless sun. No; he would stay in Paris. He would think himself safe in his workman's blouse, among workmen, most of them members of the International Society, that fatal association which had sown the seeds of anarchy all over Europe. Amongst these men the assassin would be safe; they would not betray a brother, even were he known as the murderer of the helpless.

She was in the streets before any of the shops were opened, before workaday Paris—no sluggard, whatever her vices—was beginning to stir. This was sheer restlessness, for she could do nothing without the help of her fellow-men. At eleven o'clock she was in a small office in the Marais—an office to which she had gone with Rose years ago, soon after their first coming to Paris, to inquire for work. It was a registry for servants, for clerks in a small way, and for shopmen. Here she asked how many curriers' workshops there were in Paris. She thought there would be several —ten perhaps, or even twenty.

The agent gave her a trade-directory, opened it for her at a page headed "Curriers." There were two hundred and thirty-two curriers in Paris

—two hundred and thirty-two workshops, at any one of which the man Sérizier might be plying his trade.

Hardly strange, taking this fact into consideration, that the law had hitherto failed to touch this offender; more especially as the government, though ready to administer stern justice upon such of the Communist assassins who came in its way, did not give itself very much trouble in hunting down those who had made clean off.

And then, again, the harmless Dominicans were solitary men. There was no wife or child, no friend or sweetheart, to avenge *them*.

"It will be longer than I thought," Kathleen said to herself, as she stood at a desk in the shadow at the back of the little office, copying that long list of names and addresses.

Two hundred and thirty-two workshops! There were names of streets which she had never heard of—districts, suburbs, of whose very existence she was ignorant. The work of copying those addresses alone occupied her for nearly two hours; she was so careful to write every address correctly, to be sure of every name.

When her task was done she gave the agent two francs for the use of book, ink, and paper, and asked him where she could buy a good map of Paris. He directed her to a shop in the next

street, where she got what she wanted; and this done, she went home.

Rose was singing over her baby, singing in the sunlit window, bright with flowers. Philip had fitted the windows with flower-boxes of his own designing—Swiss, rustic, what you will—constructed out of odd pieces of rough oak, the refuse of his cabinet-work. Rose was the gardener, who bought and planted the flowers, and tended these humble gardens day by day; and never had bloomed finer carnations than Rose's Gloire de Malmaison yonder, or lovelier roses than her Maréchal Niel.

Durand was at work in his carpenter's shop hard by, with a sheaf of chisels, carving a bird whose breast feathers seemed ruffled with the summer wind, so full of life was the chiselling. What a happy home it looked in the July afternoon! The tide of blood and fire had rolled by, and left this little household unscathed, untouched. Nay, in the midst of death and doom the babe had been born, and the Trinity of domestic love had been made perfect.

Kathleen sank down into a chair near her sister's, sighing faintly in very weariness.

"My love, how tired you look!" said Rose tenderly. "Have you been far?"

"No; only to the Marais."

Rose had of late abstained from all close questioning of her sister. She knew that Kathleen wandered about the streets aimlessly, wearied herself with long walks that seemed utterly without end or motive. But this idle wandering might be one way of living down a great grief. It was well perhaps to let the mourner take her own way. Nothing so oppressive as obtrusive sympathy. Rose sympathised, and said very little.

At his wife's instigation Durand watched the girl's lonely walks on two or three occasions—saw that she suffered no harm, went into no vile quarters, provoked no insult; and after being assured of this, Rose was content to let her follow her own devices.

"The angel of consolation may be leading her," she said; "saints and angels know what is best for her."

And in her high-strung faith as a Papist, Rose Durand believed that her sister's pure spirit here on earth might be in communication with the souls of that mighty company which had gone before, that great cloud of witnesses hovering round us, invisible, impalpable—the spirits of the faithful departed.

Kathleen sat silent, those dreamy eyes of hers gazing across the flowers to the blue cloudless sky. The dark-violet eyes seemed larger and

more lustrous than of old now that her face was pinched and thin; but O, so unspeakably sad!

"Why were you not home at dinner-time, dear? Have you had anything to eat since the morning?"

"I think not," Kathleen answered absently.

"And you went out so early! I was at your door before six, and found you were gone. You must be faint for want of food."

"I never feel hungry. I am a little tired, that's all."

The boy had dropped off to sleep by this time. Rose laid him softly in his cradle, and then busied herself preparing a meal for her sister.

She made some coffee in a little brown pot, which needed only a handful of burning charcoal to heat it. She brought out some Lyons sausage, a plate of salad, a hunch of crisp light bread, a roll of butter in a little covered dish half-full of ice. Everything in Rose's domestic arrangements was fresh and clean and neat. The cloth she spread on the table was spotless damask, washed and ironed by her own hands.

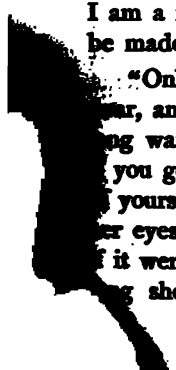
"Come, pet," she said, and coaxed her sister to the table, taking off her bonnet, smoothing the soft golden hair, kissing the pale brow, so full of gloomy thought.

Kathleen took a little coffee, but ate nothing. She sat with her eyes fixed on vacancy, scarcely conscious of the meal that had been spread for her, quite unconscious of Rose's face watching her.

"My dearest, if you don't eat — if you go wandering about and fasting for long hours — you will be fit for nothing; you will drop down in the streets; you will be carried off to a hospital."

Kathleen looked up at her with a startled expression.

"Yes, yes; you are right," she said hurriedly, and with a sudden agitation in tone and manner. "If I become too weak, ready to faint at every turn, I shall be useless—I can do nothing; and I have so much to do. Yes, dear, I will take some of this nice bread and butter. I want to be strong. I am a reed—a poor feeble reed; and I ought to be made of iron."



"Only be reasonably careful of yourself, ...r, and you will soon be strong again. Those ...g wanderings and long fastings must kill you ... you go on with them. You ought to be careful ... yourself, Kathleen," added Rose, with tears in ...r eyes—for there were times when she felt as ... it were but a question of weeks and days how ... she might keep this idolised sister—"you

ought to be careful, for my sake and Philip's. We are both so fond of you."

"Yes," Kathleen answered, in a low voice, "and for *his* sake."

She forced herself to eat, and did tolerable justice to the white sweet bread and the fresh salad. Her meals in her own apartment were less luxurious. A slice of dry bread, eaten standing, a handful of cherries and a crust, a cup of milk. She had hoarded her little stock of money ever since Gaston's disappearance. She held it ready for any expenditure that might help her in her scheme of vengeance.

"I want to be strong," she said quietly, when she had finished her meal. "I have got some employment—a—a kind of place, to which I shall have to go very early every morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Rose, sitting at work by the window, moving the cradle with her foot. "Why did you do that, dear?"

"I hardly know," answered Kathleen, with her eyes on the ground. "I thought it would be better for me to be employed."

"But I don't think you are strong enough for employment of any kind, just yet, dear," said Rose anxiously.

The idea seemed to her fraught with peril, with madness even.

"O, but I shall get stronger now that I have a motive, a settled purpose in life, a task to perform. You will see that I shall do so, Rose. Have no fear."

Her eyes brightened and flashed as she spoke —a hectic fatal light, Rose thought.

"I hope, whatever place you have taken, that the work is very easy," said the elder sister, after a pause.

"O yes, it is easy enough—very easy; in the open air mostly. You will see that my health will improve every day."

"I shall be full of thankfulness if I see that; and if the employment adds to your happiness."

"It will!" cried Kathleen eagerly. "It will make me very happy, if I succeed."

"Dearest, I never like to question you about yourself," said Rose, in a pleading tone, "for I know there are heart-wounds which should never be touched. But I should be so glad if you would tell me frankly, fully, what you are going to do?"

"I cannot, dear."

"Cannot! O Kathleen, is not that hard between such sisters as you and me?"

"All my life has been hard since the 21st of May."

"And I am to be told nothing?"

"Nothing more than I have told you already.

I have taken upon myself an avocation which will oblige me to go out very early every morning: to be out sometimes at dusk. I want you to understand this, and not to be uneasy when I am away from home."

"I cannot help being uneasy. I am anxious about you every hour of the day. Why cannot you stay at home, Kathleen, and let me take care of you? I could get you work that you could do in your own room; sheltered, safe, protected from the pollution of the streets, from the hearing of foul language, from brushing shoulders with disreputable people."

"I hear nothing; I feel no degradation. I think of nothing, am conscious of nothing, but my own business."

"Is this business—respectable—worthy of a good Catholic?"

"Yes, it is respectable. There is warrant for it in the Scriptures."

Rose looked at her with acutest anxiety. That pale fixed face, the strange brightness of the eyes, suggested an exaltation of spirit, a state of mind which touched the confines of madness. And yet the girl's voice was soft and gentle, the girl's movements were quiet and deliberate. There was no wildness of gesture, no sign of actual un-

reason. Kathleen was terribly in earnest, that was all.

From that hour the girl's health seemed to improve; both mentally and physically there was a change for the better. Her eye had a steadier light; there seemed less of exaltation, of feverish excitement. Her whole being seemed braced and strengthened, as if by some heroic purpose. Yet there were times when the light in those steadfast eyes, the marble lines of the firmly-set lips, were almost awful.

"What a woman that is, that sister-in-law of yours!" said Durand's artist-friend, the graybeard who had been one of the witnesses at the double wedding. "That face would be magnificent for Jael or Judith, for Charlotte Corday or Salammbô. That girl is capable of anything strange or heroic or deadly. She has the tenacity of a Redskin."

Durand smiled a sad incredulous smile.

"Poor child, how little you know her!" he answered. "You clever men are so easily led away by a fancy. Kathleen is one of the gentlest souls I know. She adored her husband, and her grief at his death has turned her a little here," pointing to his forehead. "But she is incapable of any violent act."

"She is capable of a great crime in a great cause, as Charlotte Corday was; the gentlest of

souls, she, till she took the knife in her hand to slay him whom she deemed the scourge of her country. I am not led away by fancies, Durand. Faces are open pages to the eye of a painter. I can read that one, and know what it means."

Philip took this for the illusion of an habitual dreamer, and attached no weight to the opinion. Kathleen had given them no cause for uneasiness since she commenced her "avocation." Her life passed with an almost mechanical regularity. She left the house every morning before seven—sometimes even before six. She had been observed to go out as early as five. She came home again at any hour between nine and eleven, breakfasted alone in her own sitting-room, did her housework, her little bit of marketing, and then slept or rested for an hour or two. Then, latish in the afternoon, she went out again, to return after dark.

This was her manner of life, as seen by her sister and her sister's husband. They puzzled themselves exceedingly as to the nature of that employment which obliged her to keep such curious hours. They talked, and wondered, and speculated; but they did not venture to question her. She had entreated Rose to forbear: and Rose, who so fondly loved her, was content to remain in ignorance, seeing that the mourner

seemed more tranquil, more resigned than before she began this unknown labour.

Yet they could not refrain from speculations and wonderings between themselves, the husband and wife, for whom life was free from all care save this one anxiety about the widowed girl.

Was her occupation that of a governess? Had she found two sets of pupils in some humble circle, where superior accomplishments were not demanded in a teacher? Did she go to one family in the morning, to another in the evening? This seemed a natural and likely explanation. But if it were so, why had she made a mystery of so simple a matter?

They could only wait and watch. They were too high-minded to follow or to play the spy upon her. But they watched her face, her bearing, when she was with them—which was but rarely now—and they waited for the revelation of her secret.

She would not make her home with them. That was Rose Durand's worst grief. If she could have had that beloved mourner beside her hearth every day; if she could have seen her bending over the little one's cradle, beguiled by the sweetness of his dawning intelligence; if she had but been allowed to soothe and console her sister, Rose would have been quite happy. She

would have trusted to her own loving arts, and to the great healer Time, and she would have looked forward to a day when Kathleen's wounds would be healed.

But Kathleen hugged her loneliness as if it were the one precious thing left to her. She would not be tempted from her solitude in the two quiet rooms up-stairs. "I am tired when I come home from my work," she said one day, when Rose upbraided her with unkindness in refusing to spend her leisure hours in the Durand *ménage*. "It would be no rest to me to be with you and baby, dear as he is. I want to be quite alone with my dreams of the past."

"They are not good for you, Kathleen, those dreams of the past."

"O yes, they are. They are my greatest comfort. Sometimes, sitting here in the afternoon sunlight, with a volume of Hugo or Musset in my lap, I almost believe that Gaston is sitting in that chair where you are now, by my side. I dare not lift my eyes to look up at him."

"Why not?"

"Because I should know then that he was not there, and the spell would be broken. You don't know how real day-dreams are to me."

"Too real, Kathleen; such dreams as these lead to madness."

"Let me be mad, then. I would rather be mad and see him there, than sane and not see him. I would welcome madness to-morrow if I could believe that he was still alive—if there need be no lucid interval in which I should remember that he was dead."

"Kathleen, you frighten me to death!"

"Forgive me, dearest," the girl answered gently. "There is no cause for fear. You do not know how steady my brain has been, how regularly my heart has beaten, ever since I have had—employment—business to do—a purpose in life. Before, I felt as if I were wandering in a desert, under a midnight sky. Comets were blazing in that sky—shooting-stars darting their light, now this way, now that; but there was no star to guide my steps—there was no road across the waste. Now I feel as if I were travelling on a straight level road, with my guiding-star shining steadily before me; there is such a difference."

"You look so white this afternoon, darling. Have you worked harder than usual to-day?"

"Yes, it was harder to-day—very, very far!" Kathleen answered, with an absent air.

"You had further to go to your employment?" faltered Rose, looking at her wonderingly. "Is it not always in the same place?"

"Not always."

"That is very strange."

"Life is strange," answered Kathleen, "almost as strange as death. O Rose, my best of sisters, don't look so troubled about me. Believe me that all is going well with me. I am doing no harm. I am doing my duty. And all will come right in the end."

This was spoken with a fervour which in some measure reassured Madame Durand. She had never suspected evil of her sister. She knew that pure nature too well for doubt to be possible upon this score. Her chief fear, her ever-present dread, was for the soundness of the girl's reason, for the capacity of her mind to stand against the strain of a great sorrow.

Kathleen would not go to her sister's rooms, but Rose went to the widow's lonely home two or three times in every day; she would not be put off by Kathleen's desire for solitude. She went to her the last thing every night, and knelt and prayed with her; but Kathleen's lips were dumb—that spirit which had once been fervent in prayer was now voiceless. The widow knelt beside her sister with bowed head, but there were some of Rose's prayers to which she would not even say Amen.

"Why do you not join in the Paternoster, Kathleen?" Rose asked tenderly.

"Because I cannot join with all my heart. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. If I said that with my lips my heart would be the heart of a liar. There are some debts that cannot be forgiven, some wrongs that must be avenged."

"Vengeance belongs to God," answered Rose quickly. "And with Him it is not vengeance, but justice."

"That is all I want," said Kathleen. "Justice, justice, justice!"

And then she lifted up her face, which had been bowed upon her clasped hands until now, and prayed aloud:

"O God, Thou art my help and deliverer! O Lord, make no tarrying! The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted. As the fire burneth the wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire, so persecute them with Thy tempest, and make them afraid with Thy storm."

CHAPTER XII.

FOUND.

THE days and weeks wore slowly on; July came and passed, and it was mid-August. Paris was at its hottest. It might have been a city in the tropics. Thick white mists rose from the boulevards and clouded the evening air. The stones in the courtyards of hotels and great houses were baked in the sunshine. The very sound of water splashing upon the hot streets was rapture. The atmosphere was heavy with heat; and it seemed as if the low thunder-charged sky were a cast-iron dome which roofed in the city and suburbs.

That city, once called beautiful, still wore the aspect of devastation. The ruined houses still gave forth an odour of smoke and burning. The fierce meridian sun drew out the stench of charred wood. On every side were the signs and tokens of destruction. On every side one heard of loss, and sorrow, and death.

The herd of tourists went tramping through the city, staring, gaping, expatiating on the spectacle—disappointed somewhat that things were no worse. They had expected to find

Babylon a heap; and here were her palaces and churches still standing, her spires and pinnacles still pointing heavenward, her domes glittering against the hot blue sky. The tourists were disillusionised, and felt they were getting very little for their money.

The mightier of the ruins remained as anarchy had left them; but here and there the work of reparation had begun. Trade was reviving. The markets had resumed their normal aspect, and food was to be had at the old prices. The theatres were beginning to reopen their doors. Restaurants and cafés had smartened themselves up to accommodate a floating population of travellers, taking this desolated Babylon on their way to fairer scenes. Again the clinking of teaspoons and the clash of glasses were heard on the boulevard. The *petits crevés*, the *cocodettes*, had emerged from retirement, or had come back from exile. Paris was Paris again; but a sorely impoverished, somewhat humiliated Paris.

Kathleen's life pursued its beaten round all this time. The oppressive heat of those August days did not deter her from her labour. Every morning before the shops were opened she was in the streets, neatly clad in her black gown and close black bonnet, a little market-basket on her arm, as of one who went upon a housewife's

errand. In the dim early morning she walked to her destination—one of those two hundred and thirty-two workshops which she had written down in her list. Some of these were in the remotest corners of Paris, and many of her morning walks were long and weary; but she was careful to allow herself ample time for these long distances. She always studied her map over-night, and learned the names of the streets by which she had to go. She was thoroughly systematic in her work; and she had by this time acquired a wonderful expertness in finding her way, a wonderful knowledge of the great wide-spreading town. It seemed to her as if there were not a corner of Paris, not a nook or an alley, which she had not explored.

Sometimes her destination was some foul-smelling lane at Belleville, some dingy street near Montmartre. She went as far as Vincennes on one side, beyond Passy on the other. But whatever the distance, she went to her work with the same quiet patience, the same tranquil aspect. Nobody ever remarked her as an eccentric-looking person; no one ever saw wildness or exaltation in her manner. She walked quietly onward, at a moderate business-like pace, her little basket over her arm; her pale earnest face shaded by the neat little crape veil, tied closely round the small

black straw bonnet; and she inspired no one's wonder or curiosity. A clerk's wife, catering for her little household; a sempstress going to her work. She might be either.

When she reached her destination, and stood in front of the curriers' workshop, her task became more difficult. She watched for the going and coming of the workmen at their breakfast-hour, between nine and ten o'clock. She had to observe without being observed. She hovered near the door of the restaurant where they took their *soupe au fromage*. She had to loiter in the street or the lane, without appearing to be a loiterer. This exacted all her powers as an actress; but, as every intelligent woman is instinctively an actress, she contrived to perform this part of her task so skilfully as to escape, for the most part, unquestioned and unremarked.

If there were shops in the street all her little purchases for that humble *ménage*, which was not much better than genteel starvation, were made upon the spot. This gave her the opportunity of wasting time, and of making inquiries. It was so easy while buying a pear or a handful of plums at the little fruit-shop, or a roll at the baker's, to ask a few questions, in mere idle curiosity as it seemed, about the currier's on the other side of the way. Was it a small or a large trade, for

instance? How many workmen were employed—and what kind of men? Then if the shopkeeper was inclined to gossip, and was friendly, she could watch the men go to their work from the threshold of his shop, and hear his remarks upon them, and be sure that she saw the full complement employed there.

Now and again it happened that a workman was ill, or drunk, or idle, and did not go to his work; and then, after ascertaining this fact, she had to come back to the same spot again, once, twice, thrice even, to make sure of that one errant workman. For the man she wanted was one man among all the curriers of Paris, and to let one escape her might be to lose him.

She hunted her prey with the tenacity of a Red Indian.

The work was very slow work. August was nearly over, and she had not completed the third part of her list. The curriers' shops were scattered. It was rarely that she could do more than two in a day—one in the morning, when the men went to their work; one in the evening, when they left work. She was getting to be curiously familiar with the curriers of Paris, their ways and their manners; the restaurants where they dined or supped late in the evening, at long narrow tables in low dingy rooms, by the light of tallow-candles,

and amid overpowering odours of cognac and cheese soup; the wine-shops where they swilled gallons of "little blue," or stupefied themselves with cheap cognac.

She learned a great deal; but in all this time there had been no sign of Sérizier, no clue to the whereabouts of that one workman.

Now and then she ventured to accost one of these blue blouses, who answered civilly or brutally, as Fate willed. But, for the most part, they were civil, in their rough way. She told her little pathetic story of a brother, a currier by trade, of whom she had lost all trace since the Commune. His chief friend was a man—also a currier—called Sérizier, and she thought it likely that, wherever Sérizier were working, her brother would be working too.

Did monsieur happen by chance to know anything about a currier called Sérizier? No, nobody knew of such a man. Some to whom she spoke remembered the name and the man in the day of his splendour—with a cocked hat, and a red scarf round his waist. There had been a passion for red scarves among the Communards. Perhaps it was the colour that charmed them, the hue of that blood which was to them as an atmosphere.

Those who knew all about Sérizier's past

career could give her no enlightenment about his present whereabouts, and she always made her inquiries judiciously, indirectly, putting forward that mythical brother as the motive of her questionings. She did not want to be known as a woman who had inquired for Sérizier, lest the hunted should get wind of the hunter. And so she came to September, and in all the blue blouses, the heavy figures, and stooping shoulders, the toil-stained hands, the close-cropped bullet-heads, she had seen no sign of Sérizier. How should she know him when she saw him?

Easily enough. First, she had his photograph, which she had discovered, after a diligent search, in a shop on the Boulevard St. Michel, among other heroes of the Commune. Secondly, she had seen him once in the flesh, and his face had impressed itself upon her memory in a flash, as if it had been photographed upon her brain. It was not a common face; it was original in its sinister ugliness, and she could recall every line in that bulldog visage.

She had seen him soon after the skirmish at Issy, when his laurels were yet green, and the street-arabs cheered him as he passed at the head of his regiment, in gaudy uniform, red scarf, waving plumes, clanking sword, on a horse which he could not ride, boastful, triumphant. It was

in the spring evening, the clear cool light of declining day, when she stood on the quay, hanging on her husband's arm, and watching the soldiers go by.

Gaston told her all about Sérizier. A brute, but a brave brute, he said, and good at training his soldiers—a man who was likely to come well to the fore, if the Commune could hold its own.

And so, with the evening sunlight on his face, Sérizier rode slowly by, she watching him, open-eyed with wonder that such a brute face as this should belong to one of the heroes of the people.

The face was as vividly before her eyes to-day as it had been that April evening. She looked at the photograph every night before she went to her rest. Let him disguise himself as he might, let him dye his skin like a blackamoor's, or hide cheeks and mouth and chin behind a forest of beard and whisker, he could never hide himself from her. His face was never absent from her mind.

So she went on with her work doggedly, hopefully, albeit there were times of fear—times when she recalled how little foundation there was for any certainty that Sérizier was in Paris, or even that he lived. The man for whose going in or coming out she watched morning and evening might be far away in the New World, rioting and

revelling upon the spoils of revolution, conveyed to him yonder by some faithful friend; or his corpse might have been huddled into one of those common graves which had yawned to receive hecatombs of nameless dead.

The Durands had both been curious as to the fate of Suzon Michel. It was known in the Rue Gît le Cœur that she had been active amidst the atrocities of the Commune, a shining light in that fiery atmosphere. She was known to have carried the chassepot and the petroleum can, to have been busy amidst scenes of riot and death. There were some who declared that she was the pétroleuse who had ridden, dressed as a vivandière, at the head of that hideous procession to the Rue Haxo, when the priests and the gendarmes were led to the slaughter, less happy in their doom than the Archbishop and his companions, who were massacred within the walls of La Roquette. Certain it is that she had been seen more than once in a vivandière's costume, and that she was known to be one of the fiercest of that hellish crew.

Some said that she had been shot down on the last of the barricades, yonder at Belleville; others declared that they had seen her in a gang of prisoners bound for Satory. No one regretted

her; but there was a morbid curiosity in the Rue Gît le Cœur, and two or three adjoining streets, as to her fate. Details of her last hours, seasoned with plenty of blood, would have been welcome.

The *crêmerie* had been closed from the first day of the barricades, and had never reopened. A board in front of the shop announced that it was *à louer présentement*. Either la Michel was verily gone to give an account of her sins in the land of shadows, or she was keeping out of the way, lest she should be called upon to answer for her misdeeds before an earthly tribunal. This was said of her in the Rue Gît le Cœur. Kathleen knew the popular mind upon this subject, and she heard Durand and Rose discuss the question on one of those rare occasions when she consented to join them at the neat little supper table. It was almost a festival for Rose when she could induce her sister to spend the evening with her.

"I always hated that woman," said Rose, speaking of Suzon Michel; "a bold bad woman, capable of any crime."

"A creature of strong passions, no doubt," answered Durand, "terribly capable of evil. But I do not know that she was quite incapable of good. These women who feel so strongly are as

fitful as a summer thunder-storm; they will adore a man one day and murder him the next. But they have the power to love as well as to hate; they have strength for self-sacrifice as well as for crime."

"I do not value their love any higher than their hate," said Rose, who had never forgotten her early impressions about Suzon, never ceased to be jealous and suspicious of the woman who had dared to love Kathleen's lover; "their hearts and minds are all evil, their love is a snare. If she is dead, well—God give me charity—let her rest in her grave; if she is living, God grant that she and I may never meet."

It was only a few days after the evening upon which this conversation occurred that Kathleen had startling evidence of Suzon Michel's existence in Paris, at the very time when people believed her to be either dead or in exile.

Those first days of September in '71 were as sultry and thunderous as the last days of August. Indeed, it seemed as if the summer grew hotter as it waned. The sun shone with tropical splendour all day, and at eventide the atmosphere was thick with heat.

It was between eight and nine, after her evening watch in a street near the Barrière d'Enfer was over, that Kathleen went to a spot which she

had visited in many a twilight hour, since she first gazed upon it in the dim early morning on the 25th of May.

This was the narrow side street in which she had seen the bloody traces of her husband's death, at the foot of the lamp-post. That dreadful spot was to her as his grave, and her coming hither had all the solemnity of a pilgrimage to a grave. The street was dull and solitary—a street of shabby houses, shabbily occupied by the working classes. It was a new street which had never attained prosperity, and three or four of the houses were empty, staring at the sky with curtainless windows, and boards announcing that they were to let. Here and there appeared a shop, but a shop which looked as if customers were the exception rather than the rule.

On this September evening the street was empty, save for a couple of women standing talking at a street-door, a little way from the lamp-post by which Gaston fell. The house facing this fatal spot was empty, had been empty ever since Kathleen had known the street. The windows were clouded with dust; the board announcing its vacancy had fallen on one side, and hung disconsolate. The proprietor had, doubtless, abandoned all hope of finding a tenant until the evil days had passed, and a new birth of prosperity

had come about for this fair land of France. It was a dreary-looking house in a dreary street; a new house which had grown old and shabby without ever having been occupied.

Kathleen walked slowly up and down the street two or three times, coming back to the fatal spot, and standing beside it for a few minutes with bent head and clasped hands, and lips moving dumbly in prayer for the beloved dead. On the last time she saw a woman coming towards the same spot—coming as if to meet her, a woman who looked to her like a ghost. Yes, like one dead, who had come back to life purified and chastened by the pilgrimage through the valley of the shadow of death.

It was Suzon Michel, but not the Suzon of old. The fire in the large black eyes was quenched, the face had lost its brazen boldness, the rich carnation of sensual vigorous beauty had faded from the cheek. A pale grave face, with serious mournful eyes, looked at Kathleen, and, recognising her instantly, blanched to the ashy whiteness of a corpse.

The women looked at each other in silence, and then each passed slowly upon her way. They met and parted without a word.

Two minutes afterwards, before she reached the corner of the street, Kathleen turned sud-

denly, and looked back, wanting to speak to Suzon Michel, to question her, she hardly knew wherefore or to what end. She thought of Suzon with horror and detestation; and yet they two had loved the same man: Suzon might know more of the details of Gaston's death than she, his wife, had been able to discover. She might know into what common grave his corpse had been flung, beneath what clay his bones were mouldering.

She turned, and the street was empty. There was not a sign of Suzon in the distance. Had she run ever so fast she could not have reached the end of the street. It was clear, then, that she had gone into one of the houses.

But which house? Kathleen loitered in the street for some time, contemplating those dreary-looking houses, trying to divine which of them had swallowed up Suzon Michel. Presently a woman came and stood at her door on the opposite side of the street. Kathleen went over to her and questioned her, describing Madame Michel, and asking if she knew of such a person.

The woman was only a lodger on the fourth story, and had not long lived there. She worked in a mattress manufactory a little way off, was out all day, and knew nothing of her neighbours.

There was no one else in the way to answer an inquiry. And, after all, what good could come of any meeting between Kathleen and Suzon?

"She hates me, and I do not love her," thought Kathleen. "But she is strangely altered. I thought Rose was right when she called her a creature altogether evil, a soul given over to wickedness. Yet to-night her face had a softer look; the unholy fire seemed to have gone out of it, as if the face and the soul had been alike bleached and chastened by suffering."

The days and weeks wore on, and the mornings and evenings grew brisk and cold. That curtain of sultry heat was lifted; the dome of white-hot iron was taken off the city, which no longer seemed like a cauldron seething and bubbling over subterranean fires. The white vapours of summer floated away from the streets and quays, from river and woods and gardens. It was October, and the leaves were falling from the poor remnants of trees in the mutilated Bois, that lovely wood which had been hewn down and converted into an *abattis*. Autumn had come, and Kathleen's work was still uncompleted, still went on; the worker patient, secret, dogged, never for one moment abandoning her purpose, never losing faith. Not till she had seen every journeyman currier in Paris would she falter or

waver in her work. Then it would be time to say, "I have deceived myself; Sérizier has left Paris"; and then it would be time to think of following and hunting him down in the place of his exile, be it far or near, in the Old World or the New. Sea or land should be as nothing to her in that search—distance and time as nothing. She felt as if she were the spirit of vengeance, a disembodied soul, free from those fetters which make humanity feeble.

Day after day she went to her task—monotonous, dreary, full of weariness for mind and body; and yet she knew not weariness. That iron purpose within her buoyed her up and sustained her. The spirit conquered the flesh.

There were days when she felt ill, very ill—sick to death almost; but she flung her illness aside, as if it had been a garment that embarrassed her movements, and went out to her work. Her white face in those days evoked the pity of strangers.

"A poor creature that ought to be in the hospital rather than in the streets," thought the passers-by. "Not long for this world," said one. "There is death in that face," said another.

Other days there were when all her limbs seemed one great aching pain; yet she crawled down the steep old staircase and into the dim

morning streets; and, like an old horse which begins his day stiffly and feebly, and shuffles himself into a trot under the goad of the whip, she gathered up her strength for the journey, and quickened her pace as she neared her goal.

Not one day did she miss in all those toilsome weeks. Happily there were the Sundays, blessed intervals of respite and rest, which gave her new strength for the coming six days.

On these quiet Sabbaths she rested all day long, lying on her bed like a log, hardly moving hand or foot, reading a little now and then, but, for the most part, resting—only resting—in a state of apathy, which was little more than semi-consciousness.

Again and again the Durands urged her to go out with them on the Sunday, to get fresh air, change, a little innocent gaiety, a few hours of forgetfulness in some pretty rustic spot. They offered to take her to Asnières, to Bougival, to Marly le Roi.

In vain.

"I have a good deal of walking every day," she said. "I like to rest—only to rest—on Sundays."

She did not tell them that the agony of weariness was sometimes so acute towards the close of the week that nothing but this long day of to-

tal inertia could have enabled her to resume the round of toil.

"But you never go to mass now, Kathleen," said Rose, with gentle reproachfulness. "You used to go regularly to the dear old church yonder," with a little motion of her head towards Notre Dame.

"Used—yes. But he was alive then, and I went to pray for him. Now—no, I could not kneel and pray in a church. Not yet, not yet. There is a cloud of blood that swims before my eyes when I try to look up to heaven."

October was passing. It was the middle of the month—the 16th— and still no sign of Sérizier. Her day's work was over, and Kathleen was walking slowly, with downcast eyes and drooping head, along the Rue de Galande in the dusk of evening. She had been watching for more than an hour in front of an obscure workshop at the end of the street. There was a Belgian name over the door. She had seen two men leave the house, one a workman, the other a man of somewhat superior appearance, who looked like the master. The workshop was small, poor-looking; and, according to her knowledge of the trade, these two men would be in all likelihood the complete staff. But she made up her mind to go back next morning to watch the men

going to their work, and to make inquiries as to the number employed. She never struck a workshop off her list until she had made herself mistress of her facts.

Suddenly, in the autumnal dusk, she looked up, startled by the rattling of an empty truck over the rough stones of the roadway. She looked up, and found herself face to face with a man in a ragged blouse, wheeling a truck.

The man was Sérizier.

She had not one moment of doubt; not a passing shadow of hesitation clouded the clearness of her mind. This was Sérizier.

She had seen him last in the pomp of his warlike accoutrements, plumed hat, clanking sword, and sabretasch, red scarf, breast bedizened with gold embroidery, chin and lip shrouded by a heavy military moustache, erect, audacious, arrogant, lording it over an admiring crowd.

To-day the man was clean-shaved; he seemed to have grown smaller, as if bent double with a load of ignominy, shrunk into his sordid inner self, lessened morally and physically by the loss of plumes and gold lace, and the insolence of successful audacity.

But Kathleen was not the less sure of his identity. Those restless shifty eyes, more unquiet than ever now that the man had fallen to the

level of hunted criminals—those evil looking eyes were not to be forgotten. It was he.

Cold and trembling, Kathleen tottered, and reeled against the wall. For a few moments her eyes were dim, and her brain was clouded, the passionate beating of her heart was almost unbearable; then, collecting her senses with a supreme effort, she turned and followed her prey, keeping at a respectful distance, and in the shadow of the houses. She saw him wheel his truck into a little yard belonging to the currier's workshop—watched him come out again and go into a wine-shop on the other side of the street, where he sat drinking and talking with another blue blouse. Kathleen stood outside in the dusk —as she had stood outside many such a window in the course of her evening watches—and studied the man's face by the light of the flaring candle, which stood in front of him, as he hobnobbed with his friend.

Yes, her patience was rewarded. She had found him—the assassin of the defenceless. The man to whom tears and blood had been as strong wine, for whom power had meant the power to slay and to burn. This bulldog-visaged workman, crooning over his pipe, talking with bent brow and angry eyes, this was the murderer of the Dominicans and of Gaston Mortemar.

She went straight to the office of the Commissary of Police of the Quartier de la Gare; but by this time it was ten o'clock, and too late for her to be admitted to an interview with any of the officials. She was told to return in the morning, when she could see the chief officer. She was there again when the office opened, saw Monsieur Grillières, and told him her story.

The intelligence was welcome, for Monsieur Grillières, misled by erroneous information, had already made more than thirty useless investigations in search of Sérizier. Monsieur Grillières started instantly, accompanied by two inspectors; but on arriving at the Rue Galande he was told that the Belgian currier had left the night before. He and his workmen had removed the stock-in-trade—some of the things had gone away in a van, some in a truck. The last truckload had been wheeled away at midnight.

Where had he gone?

Nobody knew exactly; everybody had some suggestion to offer; the ultimate result of which statements and counter-statements, assertions and contradictions, was that the Belgian currier had been heard to say that he was going to establish himself in the neighbourhood of the markets.

Thither Monsieur Grillières started in hot haste, and searched every shop occupied by a

currier, leather-seller, or morocco manufacturer, but to no purpose. He found no one resembling Sérizier among the hard-handed sons of labour smelling of leather. He began to despair, when towards five o'clock in the afternoon, crossing a street which abutted on the corn-market, he saw a van standing near a door—a van full of bundles of leather, dressed skins, and currier's implements. A man was unloading the van, and carrying the contents into the house near which the vehicle waited. Grillières went into a shop where he saw a man who looked like the proprietor.

"You are a currier?" said the magistrate.

"Yes, monsieur."

"I am a police magistrate, and I must beg you to answer my questions."

"Willingly, monsieur."

"How long have you lived in this part of the town?"

"Since last night."

"Where were you before?"

"Rue Galande."

"How many workmen do you employ?"

"Two: the man who is unloading the van, and who has been with me fourteen years; the other who has been working for me only a fortnight, and who is now in my workshop on the third floor of this house."

"What is his name?"

"Chaligny."

"His name is not Chaligny," answered Monsieur Grillières. "He is Sérizier, and I am here to arrest him."

Grillières went up-stairs, followed by his two men. On the third floor there was a door half-open, and in the room within they saw a man sharpening his knives. The man looked up, and, seeing a stranger, was seized with an instant suspicion, and stretched out his hand to snatch up a shaving-knife, the first instrument of defence or attack which offered itself. But Monsieur Grillières threw himself upon him. "You are my prisoner," he said.

"Why do you arrest me?" cried the man. "My name is Chaligny."

Duprat, one of the police-officers, had been immured as a hostage at the prison of La Santé during Sérizier's reign of terror. He recognised the *ci-devant* colonel at a glance.

"You are Sérizier," he said; "I remember you perfectly."

"Yes," answered the other doggedly, "I am Sérizier. The game is up, and I know what I have to expect. But if I had seen you fellows on the staircase just now, you should not have taken me alive."

He made no resistance, and was taken to the police-office, where he himself dictated his deposition. Thence he was transferred to the Préfecture. Thence again, after the usual formalities, he was sent to the Dépôt.

"My affairs are settled," he said to his custodians. "I have done enough to get my head washed in a leaden bath; but it's all the same to me. I regret nothing; I only did my duty."

Colonel Sérizier was right in his prophecy. His doom was to be the leaden bath; but the law's delays are tedious, and the murderer arrested in October was not to be despatched until the following February.

CHAPTER XIII.

ATONEMENT.

KATHLEEN'S mission was accomplished. There was no more for her to do. She went back to the Rue Gît le Cœur, broken in spirit and in body. She lay on her bed, and it seemed to her that her life now was one long Sunday, a time of apathy and dumb dull rest—joyless, hopeless. There was nothing more for her to do in this life. She had given the victim over to his exe-

cutioners. She was told that the end was certain. There could be no pardon, no commutation of the law's last penalty for such a wretch as Sérizier. France would rise up with one loud cry of vengeance were there any puling for mercy here.

The slow days wore on—dull gray days; storms of wind, driving showers, anon the fogs of November floating up from the neighbouring river—and still Kathleen lay on the bed or the sofa, helpless, prostrate, as some pale flower that has been torn from its stem and flung aside to wither. Rose had brought a doctor to see her; but he did not even profess the ability to cure.

"There is nothing organically wrong," he said. "Your sister must have had a very fine constitution to survive what she has gone through. It is a case of extreme weakness, loss of appetite, sleeplessness—things that tell without actual disease. If you could get her away into the country, fresh air and change of scene might do something; but she is too weak to be moved."

"We will take her away directly she is strong enough to go," said Rose.

The doctor thought that time would never come; but he held his peace, took his fee, and departed.

Rose and Philip watched the fading life in that quiet room on the upper story as devotedly

as if the thread of their own lives had been intertwined with it. But their tenderness, their little plots and expedients, were all useless. They could not lure Kathleen from her solitude, or beguile her into forgetfulness of her grief.

"While I was watching for that man I forgot everything, except the task in hand," she said; "I lived and breathed only for that. My brain was burnt up with one fiery thought; and in those days I hardly grieved for Gaston—I hardly knew how much I had lost; but now I think of him, and brood upon him all day long."

"But if this goes on you will go mad, or die," said Philip, standing beside her sofa, looking down at her with honest earnest eyes, full of affection; "and that will break Rose's heart. Remember how she has reared you and cared for you! To her you are more than a common sister. She has been to you as a mother; and you owe her filial duty."

"Let her ask me anything, except to live," answered Kathleen. "I *cannot* live without him. O, she must let me go—in charity she will let me go—where I shall be at rest for ever, as he is. She has you and the little one. She can spare this broken life."

"But she cannot spare you—nor I, nor the
e one; and it is your duty to live for our

sakes. Your natural grief we would respect, Kathleen; but this inordinate grief, this obstinate despair—"

"Had he died a natural death, I would mourn for him as other widows mourn for their husbands; I would bow to the will of God. But he was murdered."

"And you have brought his murderer to justice. Is not that enough, Kathleen?"

"I wonder whether I shall live to hear his sentence, to know that he has suffered a murderer's doom?" she murmured; and then she turned her face to the wall, and would talk no more that day.

Rose and her husband began to despair. It seemed to them that Kathleen's vital power was ebbing day by day, gradually, imperceptibly. The loss of strength was only indicated by the facts of her daily life. Last week she had risen early every morning, and had swept and dusted her rooms, with only a little help from Rose, who was ever on the watch to aid and comfort her. This week she could only crawl about a little, dusting Gaston's books with tremulous hands, arranging and rearranging his desk or his bookshelves, with a fluttered nervous air. A little while ago she had lain on her bed or her sofa all day, as if in mere purposeless apathy. Now the time had

come when she lay there from sheer weakness, broken down, fading before their very eyes.

They had gradually schooled themselves to bow to the rod. They began to talk to each other about her as of one foredoomed, unspeakably precious, inasmuch as she was to be with them but a few weeks—perchance but a few days. They talked sorrowfully, yet with resignation, of a future in which she was to have no part, save as a sweet sad memory.

"How fond she would have been of you, my angel," said Rose, prattling mothers' tender prattle to the baby on her knees, "if she could but have lived to see you grow up!"

One day, when the invalid up-stairs had sunk so low that it seemed as if she could hardly last to the end of the week, Philip Durand came past the little *crêmerie*, which had once been Suzon Michel's, on his way home. It was between four and five, and already dusk, and he was startled to see the door of the shop open and a light within.

While he stared, wondering whether a tenant had been found for the deserted house now that trade was looking up a little, Suzon herself emerged from the darkness within, followed by a man who blew out a candle, and came into the street, carrying a bunch of keys. The man was

the landlord, who had been making an inspection of the premises with his old tenant.

"Come, Madame Michel," he said, as he locked the door on the outside, "you cannot do better than take down the shutters to-morrow morning; no one will do so well as you in that shop, and now that business is brisk everywhere, you may make a better trade than ever. I shall not raise your rent—"

"O, but monsieur is so generous!" cried Suzon ironically; "everybody knows that rents are going up in Paris."

"Well, I say it shall be the old rent."

"I'll think it over," said Suzon; "but it will be at least a week before I can decide. Certain it is that I must do something; one cannot live upon one's savings for ever."

"It was a suicide to shut up such a shop as that, except for just the week of the barricades. But you are not half the woman you were, Madame Michel; the air of your present abode cannot agree with you."

He wished her good-evening and trotted away, fingering his bunch of keys. Two minutes afterwards she met Philip Durand face to face.

Yes, she was changed. The woman of the people, the amazon, the pétroleuse, was curiously subdued and softened. Some chastening influence

had subjugated her vehement nature, and altered the expression of her countenance to a degree that was almost a transformation.

"Monsieur Durand!" she exclaimed, with a startled look; and then she said quietly, "I am a stranger in this neighbourhood now. It is like coming back to an old life. How is your wife?"

"She is very well."

"And her sister—Madame Mortemar?"

"She is—dying."

"Dying! That is a strong phrase."

"It is the truth. We have done all that care and love could do, but she is slipping away from us. I have no hope that she will last to the end of the month."

"What is her malady?"

"A broken heart."

"Ah, that is more common than doctors believe! Has she never got over the loss of her husband?"

Suzon had turned to accompany Philip, and they were walking side by side towards the Rue Gît le Cœur.

"Never."

"I suppose, though, she is glad that Sérizier was taken the other day?"

"She was glad; it was her own work. She only lived to bring the murderer to justice and

that being accomplished, it seemed as if the mainspring of her life was broken."

"*She* brought him to justice!" cried Suzon. "What do you mean?"

"Simply what I say; Sérizier's arrest was brought about solely by my sister-in-law; she watched and waited for him, day by day, for three months. It was she, and she only, who brought him to his doom."

"I read in the papers that it was a woman, but I thought it was a jealous woman—some discarded mistress, perhaps. And you say that it was she—that lily-faced girl—*she* who tracked the murderer to his hole?"

"She, and no other."

"And she is dying?"

"Yes, she is dying. The task weakened the sources of life; body and mind were alike exhausted by the long patient effort—unshared, unknown by those who loved her—and now a broken heart has done the rest."

"She shall not die!" cried Suzon, with a voice so loud that it startled the passers-by, who turned and stared at her; "no," she went on hurriedly, breathlessly, "if there is a God in heaven she shall not die. If there is no God, well, then this earth is a shambles, and the innocent have no friend. She shall not die!"

"What can you do to save her?"

"Give her something to live for, give her so strong a reason why she should live that the tide of life will flow back to her veins, the weary heart will beat strong with hope and love."

"You are mad!"

"No, I am not mad. Go and get a fly. Can she be moved, do you think? Could she bear to be driven a little way?"

"God knows. She is as weak as an infant!"

"O, only go and get the carriage. We will manage it, we will carry her. Go; I have but to whisper in her ear, and she will have the strength of a lioness. Bring the carriage to the door yonder; I will run on and see your wife."

Durand thought she must be mad; but her earnestness, her energy were electrical, and he obeyed her. In a case so hopeless any gleam of hope was welcome. There was some secret to be told, some revelation coming. He scarce asked himself what, but hurried off to engage the first prowling fly he could find.

Suzon ran up-stairs to the third floor. She listened at the door of Kathleen's sitting-room. There was a faint murmur of voices within, and she entered without knocking.

Kathleen was lying on the sofa near the fireplace, her wasted cheek white as the pillow on

which it rested. Rose sat by her, bending over her, talking to her in low murmurs. The room was dimly lighted by a lamp on the mantelpiece.

Suzon went across the room and knelt by the invalid's side.

"It is I, Suzon Michel," she said, "the woman who once hated you, but who has since learnt to pity you, and who now honours you. Is it true that you tracked that wild beast to his lair? that when all the police in Paris had failed to find him, you hunted that tiger down?"

"Yes, I found Sérizier. They say he will be shot."

"*Sacré nom*, yes, he shall be shot. The women of the Place d'Italie—the people who lived in fear and dread of him, to whom his name was a terror—they will not let him escape, now the law has got him. Madame Mortemar, will you come with me? I want to take you to my home, yonder close to the spot where your husband fell."

Kathleen started up into a sitting position. It was like a sudden awakening to life, as if some magic wand had been waved over her, magnetising the feeble clay.

"What!" she cried, "you live there! I thought it must be so, that night. Yes, yes, take me to the spot where he fell. Let me see it once more

—once before I die. To me it is as sacred as a grave. I cannot go to his grave," she added despairingly.

"Dear love, you are too weak to stir," pleaded Rose tenderly, with her arms about her sister's wasted form.

"She is not too weak to come with me. She should come if she were in her grave-clothes. You can come with us—you can help me to carry her down-stairs. Your husband will have a fly ready. Yes!" cried Suzon, running to the window, "it is there, at the door below. Bring some brandy in a bottle—wet her lips with a little first. A warm shawl, so," wrapping it round her as if she had been a child. "You are not afraid to come, are you, my little one? I have good news for you at the end of the journey."

Her impetuosity evolved a corresponding energy in Kathleen, who was tremulous with excitement. Rose understood that there was new life at the end of this sudden journey. Yes, there was a revelation at hand, about Gaston. She kept herself calm and steady while those two others were on fire with excitement. Between them she and Suzon Michel carried Kathleen down-stairs to the fly, the three women got inside, Kathleen wrapped in thick shawls. Philip got on the box

beside the driver; in a crack or so of his whip they were rattling into the Boulevard St. Michel.

It was a longish drive to the Place d'Italie; but, urged by Suzon, the man got over the distance very quickly. The dull side-street looked unspeakably dreary in the wintry gloom, the lamps burning dimly, the windows showing little light—signs of failure and poverty on every side.

The fly stopped before that empty house which Kathleen had noticed in the summer gloaming. The board was still hanging above the door, the windows were all blank and dark; but Suzon opened the door with her key, while Durand lifted Kathleen out of the vehicle.

"Carry her up-stairs, following me," said Suzon; "but she and I must go into the room alone. You others must stay outside."

"It is not a trap, is it?" asked Rose, frightened. "You mean her no harm?"

"I mean her all the good in the world, and she knows it," answered Suzon, holding Kathleen's hand, which feebly pressed hers in response to these words.

They stopped at the door of the back room on the first floor, Suzon first; then Philip, with Kathleen carried on his shoulder; Rose in the rear, but pressing close against them, lest there should be danger ahead.

Kathleen slipped from Durand's arms, and clung to Suzon Michel, as the latter opened the door. The two women went into the room together, and Rose and her husband were left outside.

There was one instant's silence, and then a wild shriek, a shriek that might be terror, grief, or joy. One could not tell what it meant, outside the door.

Rose was in an agony. She would have dashed into the room, but Philip held her back.

"Let them be for a few moments," he said. "Mortemar is alive. The mystery can be only that—alive, and shut up in this house, under watch and ward of that woman."

Two minutes after, the door was opened by Suzon, and the Durands went in. The room was comfortable enough within, desolate as the house looked outside. The furniture was humble, but neat and decent. There was a fire burning in the grate, a lamp on the table.

In an easy-chair in front of the fire sat a man with his leg in splints from the hip downwards. He was pale to ghastliness, and had the look of one who had but begun the slow progress of recovery from a sickness nigh unto death. His hair and beard were long, his hands thin to transparency.

Yes, it was Gaston Mortemar, and his wife was kneeling at his feet, kissing the wasted hands, murmuring sweetest words, nestling her head in his bosom, ineffably happy.

"I give you back your dead," said Suzon solemnly. "He was left for dead when I picked him up and brought him in here, shot through shoulder and hip and leg with half a dozen bullets. The surgeon I brought to him said it was a hopeless case; but for the sake of surgery, as an amateur, he would try to cure him. For two months he lay in instant danger. For seven weeks he was mad with brain-fever—fever that came from the pain of his wounds. I have nursed him through all. The surgeon will tell you if I have been a faithful nurse. And now I give him back to you, not healed, but on the fair road to recovery; although he will be lame all his life, poor soul; but that does not count in a writer, does it? He will be all the greater with his pen if he has less temptation to roam."

"Bless you! May God bless and reward you for your devotion!" cried Kathleen.

"Bah! There is no question of blessing or reward. I have been a wicked woman. I kept him like a bird in a cage, and I let you think him dead, and I told him you had perished on the last day of the barricades, and I let him

mourn for you. He was helpless, in my power, and I lied to him and cheated him. But I snatched him from the jaws of death; the surgeon who has attended him will tell you that. I dragged him into this empty house, dragged him away just as the last batch of Sérizier's blood-hounds were turning the corner of the street, whooping for more blood; and I kept him here, closely guarded, hidden from all the world, except the surgeon, who believed that he was my brother. He could tell no tales, poor fellow, for it is only within the last three weeks that he has been in his right wits."

Gaston's head was leaning forward against Kathleen's, the husband's haggard brow against the wife's wasted cheek. Both faces were the image of death, and yet radiant with a new-born life—the sublime light of happy love.

"She told me you were dead, Kathleen," he murmured.

"Forgive her, dear. She saved you, and I have avenged you. O my love! my love! God is good. He has given you back to me, out of the grave."

"How did you manage to occupy this house, and to keep your existence here a secret?" asked Durand.

"There was no difficulty. I was not without means. I went to the landlord, and offered him half the rent of the house for the use of two or three rooms at the back. The house had been unlet a year and a half—the street is a failure—so he was glad to accept my offer, and the board was left up over the door to avert suspicion. The people who saw me go in and out took me for a care-taker; nobody asked any questions. I had a van-load of furniture brought here after dark from my rooms at the *crêmerie*, and I made things as comfortable as I could for my patient. If he had any knowledge of those dark days he would know that I nursed him faithfully. For six weeks I scarcely knew what it was to sleep for an hour at a stretch. I had a mattress at the foot of his bed, and I lay down now and then like a dog, and slept a dog's sleep, with my ear on the alert for the first groan of pain."

"God bless you!" cried Kathleen, taking her hand and kissing it.

"You are a strange woman," said Durand; "but let no one say that you are wholly bad."

"I was a devil in those days of the barricades. I was mad like the rest of them, maddened with the thought of all the wrongs that we *canaille* have suffered from the beginning of the world. Yes, from the days when Herod put

John the Baptist in prison, and cut off his head, to keep faith with a princess who danced. I was drunk with blood, like the rest of them. But in six weeks of watchfulness and watching one has time to think; and, in the silence of the night, sometimes, I used to wonder whether it was good for a woman to be an *esprit fort*, whether it was not better to be cheated, even, and to believe in some one up yonder, who can set the riddle of this world right when He chooses—some hand turning the great wheel of destiny yonder behind the clouds. No, Monsieur Durand, I am not all evil."

It was not till the end of the year that Gaston was well enough to be removed to the Rue Gît le Cœur, and, in the mean time, he and his wife occupied the rooms in the empty house near the Place d'Italie, with that good-natured busybody, Madame Schubert—generally known as *c't bonne Schubert*—to take care of them. Suzon Michel went straight from the house where those two whom she had held apart were lost in the bliss of an unhoped-for union, and gave herself up to the police. The account against her name was heavy, and payment in full was exacted. She was despatched with a gang of Communards on board a rotten old ship bound for Cayenne, and

in the unutterable miseries of that dreadful voyage she was like an angel of mercy to her fellow-sinners. And at the convict settlement the pétroleuse, the amazon, became the nurse and ministering angel of the fever-stricken wretches in the prison hospital, a source of comfort and of hope to many a dying captive, till the deadly climate did its work, and the pestilence struck her down as it had stricken others—a woman young in years, but old in strange and sad experience; a sinner, but not without hope of pardon.

The dark days of November and December were blissful days for Kathleen. Health and strength returned to her as if by magic; and in a week after her restoration to happiness she was able to help in waiting upon her husband. Another week and she would hardly allow Madame Schubert to do anything for him. In the third week she was walking to and fro the printing office of Gaston's old journal, which had been resuscitated under a new name, as *The Friend of Freedom*, and the proprietor of which was enraptured to receive "copy" from the brilliant pen of his old contributor, given up as lost to literature for ever.

Yes, those were happy days. That poor shattered leg of Gaston's had shrunk and shortened, and he would go limping along the road of

life to the end of his days; but his mind was clear and vigorous as ever, and his heart was content. During the enforced quiet of those December days he made a vigorous beginning upon that scheme of a novel which he had mentioned to Kathleen on their wedding-day. But he did not keep his work secret from his wife, as he had threatened. He garnered up no surprises, being in too much need of her sympathy to sustain his belief in himself.

He read the day's portion aloud to Kathleen at night, the last thing, when that good old Schubert, who insisted upon coming every day with her market-basket, smelling of *les Halles Centrales*, to cook and attend upon them—when Maman Schubert had taken her modest little nip of eau de vie, put her arm through the handle of her empty basket, and wished them good-night for the sixth or seventh time. Then Kathleen perched herself upon the arm of her husband's chair and nestled her head upon his shoulder while he read his manuscript. It was a love-story, full of passion and fire, and Kathleen felt that it must make a mad, a furious success. Nor was she far out in her reckoning. When a man, whose pen has grown bold and brilliant in the work of a literary journeyman, whose memory has garnered the experience of a youth and man-

hood spent in the very whirlpool of metropolitan life, and who has read and dreamed and thought superabundantly in his leisure hours and his wanderings to and fro—when such a man girds up his loins and says, "Enough of the hard facts of life —now I will give myself full play in the garden of fancy," the chances are that he will write a grand novel.

Sérizier was condemned to death on the 17th of February 1872, by the sixth council of war. He appealed against this sentence, setting forth the service which he had done to General Chanzy, on the 19th of March '71, in defending him against the revolutionary mob. It was rumoured in the neighbourhood of the Place d'Italie that Sérizier would not be executed; whereupon an unprecedented agitation arose among the people. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood, remembering the agony of terror under which they had lived on account of this man, signed a petition demanding that no commutation of the extreme sentence should be accorded to the late chief of the 13th Legion, and entreating that, as an example and a just expiation, he should be executed in front of the prison over which he had ruled, and on the very spot where he had presided over the massacre of the Dominicans.

This strange request could not be granted; but Sérizier's crimes were of too black a dye to admit of mercy. He and his lieutenant Bobèche were shot on the plain of Satory.

Gaston Mortemar's novel was published in the following autumn, and obtained a more brilliant success than any book that had appeared since Madame Bovary. There was a fire and a freshness in the style which made the appearance of the story a sensation, an event; and Gaston saw himself released for ever from the tread-mill routine of a third-rate newspaper, a man with place and name in the ranks of literature, free to write what he liked, and secure of publisher and public. And as the years wore on—years of peace and prosperity—those two households of the Durands and the Mortemars were undarkened by so much as a passing cloud. Industry, honour, and domestic love ruled in each *ménage*, and there was no break in the union between the sisters; albeit, Durand and Rose remained constant to their town quarters in the Rue Gît le Cœur, while Gaston and his wife transferred their household gods to a dainty little villa at Passy, where the husband could write in his garden among the birds and flowers, while his young

wife guided the footsteps of her yearling baby up and down the little grass-plot.

The carved-oak sideboard was bought by Sir Richard Wallace, and Durand's fame as a craftsman and artist was safely established from that hour: and so, where there had been cloud there was sunshine, where there had been storm there was perfect and holy calm.

THE END.

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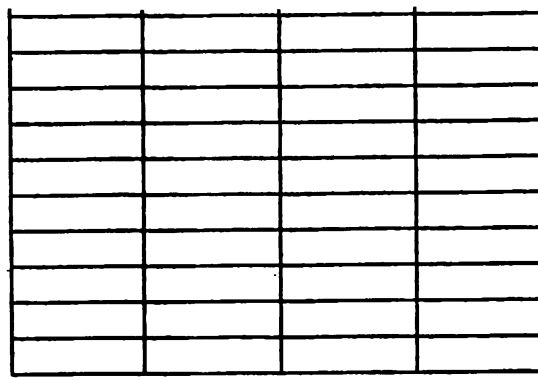
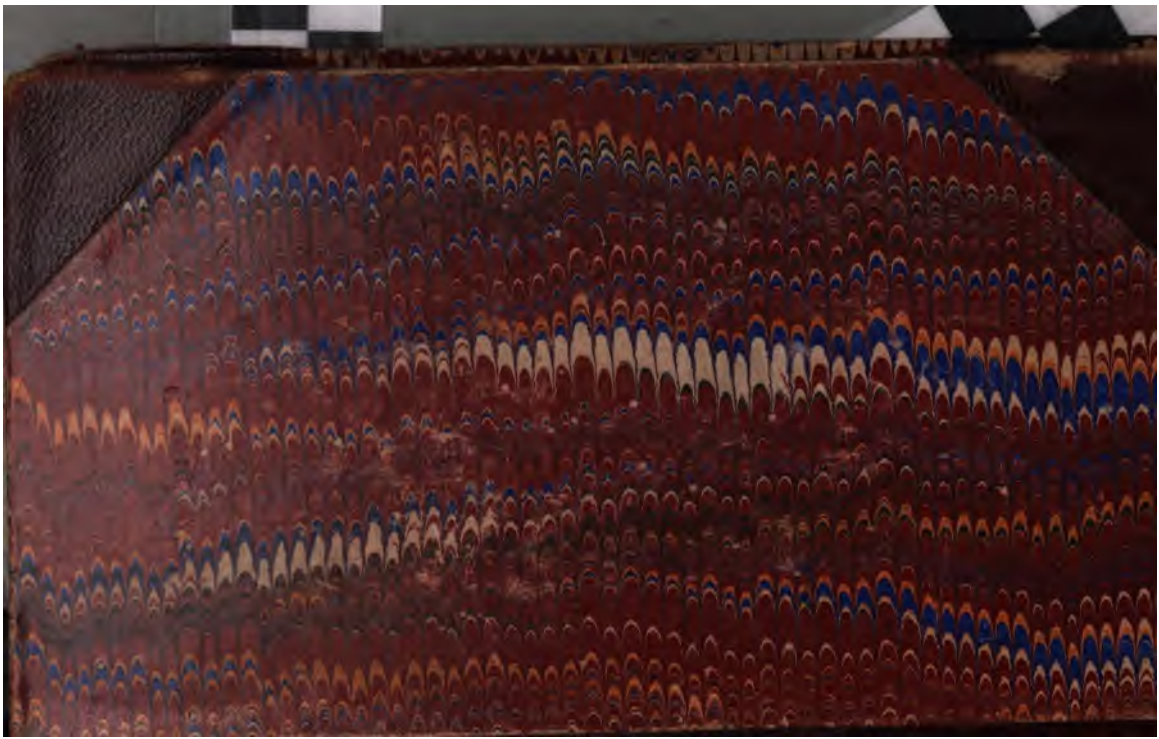
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